

LESBIAN IDENTITY:
A THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF IDENTITY IN A LESBIAN

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This dissertation, written by

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For
All Women Everywhere
but especially
Lillian, my mother
Joan and Beverley, my sisters
and
Linda, my friend

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ABSTRACT

Since the writer began with the assumption that lesbianism is a valid lifestyle, the legitimacy of lesbianism was not argued in this dissertation. The purpose was to suggest a model of identity development that would be useful in understanding the stages a lesbian goes through in the search for identity, and to test it by use of a representative case. The five stages hypothesized were: Awareness, Denial, Anger, Acceptance and Wholeness/Authenticity.

As a second hypothesis, it was suggested that at each stage in the development of a lesbian's identity she is operating out of a particular ethical mode, and that the ethical mode out of which she operates has a profound effect on her self-understanding and thence on her behavior. It was suggested that as her ethical way of thinking changes, so she is enabled to move on to the next stage in the development of her identity. The stage of wholeness/authenticity is possible only when a lesbian thinks and acts out of the theological/ethical mode of response.

The methodology employed in the study was descriptive and analytical. A representative case, especially chosen for its appropriateness to the research being undertaken, was described and analysed to test the writer's hypotheses. The researcher made contact with seven lesbians and had an initial conversation with each of them. From those seven conversations, four lesbians were chosen for more in-depth interviews. Two interviews each one-and-a-half hours in length were conducted with each of the four lesbians chosen. The purpose of the

interviews was to hear the "life story" of each, particularly as it related to her experience as a lesbian. From these interviews, the case study which most adequately represented the model was chosen and presented in the dissertation as a representative case. Analysis of the content of the case material was then made for the purpose of determining whether or not the representative case confirmed the two hypotheses.

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. In at least one instance, the hypothesis was upheld that a lesbian proceeds through the stages of awareness, denial, anger, acceptance and wholeness/authenticity in the development of her identity.
2. In at least one instance, it was seen that the stages occurred in sequence, beginning with awareness and moving on through to wholeness/authenticity.
3. In at least one instance, it was seen that while the stages did occur in sequence, there was much overlapping.
4. Very few cases, if any, will fit neatly into all the phases and all the stages as presented in the model. This was not seen as evidence for changing or discarding the model, however, but simply as evidence that every case will have variations peculiar to itself.
5. In at least one instance, the hypothesis was upheld that successful resolution of a lesbian's identity crisis is possible when she moves beyond the deontological and teleological ethical stances, and begins operating out of the theological/ethical mode of response.
6. There is a strong possibility that what was found to be true in the representative case will be found to be true in other cases when

further research is done. The use of the representative case in this dissertation prepared the way for the more extensive empirical research required in order that the model presented can be verified.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Lesbianism, i.e. homosexuality in women, is an area of study that has been largely neglected by all disciplines up to the present time. Those disciplines within which most of the work on homosexuality has been done, viz. psychology, sociology and theology, have tended to concentrate on male homosexuality with the questionable assumption that whatever is true of male homosexuals must also be true of female homosexuals. This assumption can be, and is being questioned at the present time because of the obvious differences that exist between male and female homosexuals.

First of all, theories of etiology are different in some respects. One example of this is the theory that dissatisfaction with the female role is one of the causes of lesbianism.¹ Secondly, lifestyles are different. Male homosexuals tend to frequent gay bars in large numbers,² while lesbians prefer to meet in small groups in each other's homes³. Again, while many male homosexuals are involved in

¹See Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 398; also Bruno Bettelheim, "Growing Up Female," in Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (ed.) Psychoanalysis and Contemporary American Culture (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 170.

²Evelyn Hooker, "The Homosexual Community," in Ralph W. Weltge (ed.) The Same Sex (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), pp. 29-35.

³See chapter two: "The Lesbian Community."

one-night stands,⁴ the majority of lesbians are said to be looking for a long-term relationship.⁵ Finally, specific day-to-day problems are different in many respects. For example, while male homosexuals live with the fact that entrapment by the law is a constant possibility, most lesbians do not.⁶ On the other hand, while many lesbians who are mothers live with the fear that they could at any time be judged unfit to parent their own children, most male homosexuals do not.⁷ Even this very brief look at some of the differences in theories of etiology, in lifestyles, and in specific day-to-day problems, reveals the falseness of the above assumption. What is true for the male homosexual cannot be assumed to be true for the lesbian.

A review of the literature on homosexuality reveals that lesbianism as a phenomenon distinct from male homosexuality has only recently been given serious attention. Even so, most of the writing is coming from homosexual and heterosexual women within the Women's Movement, and is largely subjective in nature. While there is some very valuable material being written, there is still a need for more research to be done, particularly in the fields of psychology, sociology and theology.

The present study, undertaken from psychological and theological-

⁴Hooker, p. 30.

⁵Donald W. Cory, The Lesbian in America (New York: Tower, 1971)

⁶Alfred C. Kinsey, et.al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (New York: Pocket Books, 1965), pp. 483-6.

⁷Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, Lesbian/Woman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), pp. 140-76.

ethical perspectives, will concentrate on the lesbian's struggle to resolve the crisis of identity. At a time when the individual's feeling of acceptance by society is so crucial to the resolution of identity conflict, the lesbian finds herself confronted with a societal environment that is blatantly hostile to the kind of person she knows herself to be. There is no feeling of "sameness and continuity" with her heritage, which according to Erikson, is a crucial factor for all persons in the successful resolution of the identity conflict.⁸ As a consequence of this lack of a sense of "sameness and continuity," a lesbian will generally take much longer to resolve the crisis of identity than will a heterosexual woman in comparable circumstances. The reasons for this prolonged identity struggle will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

B. PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

One of the purposes of this study after setting out the response-relationship between a lesbian's personal identity and her social identity (as these terms are defined in this dissertation), is to suggest five developmental stages through which a lesbian moves in her struggle to achieve successful and satisfactory resolution of the identity conflict. The words chosen to name the stages have definite psychological and theological significance, as will be seen in chapter three. The stages are:

⁸Erik H. Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle (New York: International Universities Press, 1959), p. 111.

- 1) The Stage of Awareness
- 2) The Stage of Denial
- 3) The Stage of Anger
- 4) The Stage of Acceptance
- 5) The Stage of Wholeness/Authenticity

Each of these stages is seen as the lesbian's response to the knowledge of who she is, and to the knowledge that who she is is not acceptable in the society in which she lives and of which she is a part. As her knowledge of herself and her relationship to society changes, so her response will change. She will move on to another stage in the development of her identity, or in some instances she will move back to the security of a previous stage.

The contribution this study will make to the field of Theology and Personality is in the area of theology and human development. To look theologically and psychologically at the stages through which a lesbian passes in the development of her identity is to open up an important field of inquiry largely neglected by theological education at the present time.

An important part of the study will be the ethical analysis of the stages as represented in the case study. It will be seen that the particular ethical stance out of which a lesbian operates has a profound effect on her mode of decision-making and thence on her behavior. Each stage will be examined in light of the different approaches to ethical decision-making, viz., deontology, teleology and responsibility.

Another purpose of this study is to prepare the way for more in-depth research into the question of the homosexual woman's struggle for identity in a society where "heterosexual" is the norm. The use of a representative case is presented as an acceptable way of opening

up the area for further research.

On a more practical level, another purpose of the study is the hope that it will bring some degree of enlightenment to those in the helping professions, particularly educators, therapists, and ministers, who are so often called upon for help in resolving the confusion lesbians experience in relation to who they are. To be aware of the developmental stages of identity suggested in this study will give persons in the helping professions a basis on which to begin to understand where the lesbian is in the developmental process, and what the possibilities are for her growth and eventual resolution of the identity conflict. Let me state here as directly as possible that this study presupposes the legitimacy of lesbian lifestyles. Consequently it can be expected that it will be more helpful to those educators, therapists, and ministers who share this basic presupposition than to those who do not.

Finally, it is hoped this study will be of significance to lesbians themselves. To know that the confusion and the struggle one is experiencing is common to other sisters in similar circumstances would be a help in itself. To be able objectively to observe and name the stages one has already passed through, and to know it is possible to move on to achieve a satisfactory resolution of the conflict one is presently experiencing, would bring confidence and hope to the lesbian who, despite society's negative attitude to her, is continuing to seek integrity of personality.

C. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is descriptive and analytical. It is, to an extent, modeled after Erikson's work on the stages of the life cycle, with particular reference to his studies of Gandhi⁹ and Luther.¹⁰ A representative case will be described and analysed for the purpose of testing the writer's hypotheses that:

- 1) A lesbian proceeds through the stages of Awareness, Denial, Anger, Acceptance and Wholeness/Authenticity, in the struggle to achieve satisfactory resolution of the conflict of identity; and
- 2) Successful resolution of the prolonged identity crisis experienced by a lesbian begins to occur when she moves from a deontological-ethical stance to a teleological-ethical stance, and is fully resolved when she begins operating out of the theological ethic of response.

1. The Representative Case:

One approach to the study of personality which Franklin C. Shontz predicts "may have considerable potential for personological research," is the use of the Representative Case.¹¹ The aims of this method are "to test deductively derived hypotheses, through the examination of single subjects, chosen for their specific appropriateness

⁹Erik H. Erikson, Gandhi's Truth (New York: Norton, 1969)

¹⁰Erik H. Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: Norton, 1958)

¹¹Franklin C. Shontz, Research Methods in Personality (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965), p. 234.

to the research problem of interest."¹²

Shontz admits the use of single subjects in the study of personality is "far from popular" among researchers, but points out that the potential of the Representative Case method cannot be judged fairly because it has "not yet been taken sufficiently seriously or employed in the conduct of many meaningful and well-designed investigations."¹³

G. W. Allport speaks of "doubts and misgivings concerning the representativeness of any single case" but goes on to say that it is in the single case that the social scientist finds "the vivid and irreducible stuff that constitutes such knowledge as to [her] him is immediately certain and trustworthy."¹⁴

The present study is an attempt to take the Representative Case method seriously. The hypotheses have been tested by examining the development of identity in a subject specially chosen for her appropriateness to the research being undertaken. It must be understood that this study makes no claims beyond the fact that the hypotheses have been tested and supported in this particular instance. The fact that they are supported in this one instance, however, makes it

¹²Ibid., p. 234. Examples of the use of this method can be found in Rollo May, Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology (New York: Basic Books, 1958); Rhona and Robert N. Rapoport, Dual-Career Families (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971); and Robert W. White, Lives in Progress (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966)

¹³ Shontz, p. 252.

¹⁴Gordon W. Allport, The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1951), p. xi.

possible to suggest that similar research with larger numbers of lesbians would result in the verification of the hypotheses presented.

2. Selection of the Case:

After my hypotheses were established, I interviewed seven lesbians in an attempt to find an "appropriate" subject. The particular subject, or representative case, was selected for the following reasons: 1) she is a lesbian; and 2) she appeared, during the initial conversation and during the interviews, to have already come to some degree of satisfactory resolution of conflict in the development of her identity. It was felt that this was a necessary factor in order that each of the stages hypothesized could be tested adequately with this one case.

3. Presentation of the Case:

The subject was interviewed on two separate occasions. Each interview was 1-1/2 hours in length. A tape recorder was used so that no important details would be missed. The case as it is presented in chapter five begins by sketching the subject's early life history as remembered and interpreted by the subject herself. Then, the subject's account of her life history from the time of her awareness of her homosexual tendencies to the present time, is told in detail.

D. ANALYSIS

The analysis of the case has been undertaken in two steps. First, an analysis of the content of the case material has been made

for the purpose of determining whether or not the representative case confirms the dissertation's first hypothesis that a lesbian moves through five particular stages in the struggle to resolve the identity conflict. Secondly, an analysis has been made to determine the ethical stance out of which the subject was operating at each stage in the development of her identity, to confirm the second hypothesis that resolution of the identity crisis is more likely to occur when a lesbian is operating out of the theological-ethical mode of response.

E. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The significant limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The study is limited by the fact that it assumes the validity of Erikson's concept of identity and bases its own definition of identity on his concept. As the presentation of this study's model proceeds, however, it will become obvious that while Erikson's general definition of identity is accepted, his contention that the way in which a woman resolves the identity conflict is different from the way in which a man resolves it, is not accepted. In Erikson's view, a woman generally resolves her identity conflict through identification with the man in her life. "I would think," says Erikson, "that a woman's identity develops out of the very way in which she looks around and selects the person with whose budding identity she can polarize her own."¹⁵ This study will prove that at least one woman, a lesbian,

¹⁵Richard I. Evans, Dialogue with Erik Erikson (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 49.

was able to resolve the conflict without identifying with a man, and will strongly suggest that the same is true for the majority of lesbian feminists and heterosexual feminists today.

2. This study is also limited by its own definitions of personal and social identity. This is not to say the definitions in any way contradict those of psychologists or sociologists drawn upon in the section dealing with identity. On the contrary, the definitions of personal and social identity used here have actually grown out of the writer's attempt to bring together the work of psychologist Erik Erikson and sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.

3. In keeping with the title of the dissertation, this study will be limited to lesbians. It could be that the same stages in the development of identity are true for heterosexual feminists and also for male homosexuals, but the present study does not make any attempt at all at making such statements. The concern here is with the peculiar relationship a lesbian has with society, occasioned by the fact that she is twice stigmatized. In a male-dominated society, a heterosexual feminist, i.e. a woman who will not "keep her place," carries a stigma that a woman who "keeps her place" does not carry. Similarly, in a heterosexually-oriented society, a male homosexual carries a stigma that heterosexual males do not carry. In a male-dominated, heterosexually-oriented society, therefore, a lesbian, i.e. a woman who neither "keeps her place" nor relates primarily in a heterosexual way, carries both stigmas.

4. Discussion of the theological-ethical mode of response will be based exclusively on H. Richard Niebuhr's The Responsible Self,

for it is in this work that he presents his ethic of response.¹⁶ To clarify the way in which Niebuhr is used in this paper, it is necessary to say that it is not my intention to use him in an attempt to prove the legitimacy of lesbianism nor to prove the naturalness of homosexual expression. Such an attempt would be fruitless simply because Niebuhr does not himself at any time enter into a discussion of the ethical dimensions of sexuality. Rather, my intention here is to present his ethic of response as that ethic which makes it possible for any person to mature to the stage of wholeness and authenticity in the development of identity.

Actually, my use of the ethic of response corresponds to Lawrence Kohlberg's use of the ethic of deontology and of teleology in his discussion of levels of moral development.¹⁷ He suggests that those persons who operate out of a deontological-ethical position are at "pre-conventional" and "conventional" levels in their moral development, while those who operate out of a teleological ethic are at a more mature, "postconventional" level. In this paper, the ethic of response is presented as that ethic which makes possible an even more mature level of moral development. It is suggested here that the ethic of response is that mode of ethical reflection which makes wholeness and authenticity possible.

¹⁶H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

¹⁷Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," Psychology Today II:4 (September 1968) 25-30.

F. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Lesbian, Homosexual Woman

These terms will be used interchangeably throughout the dissertation to refer to "a woman whose primary erotic, psychological, emotional and social interest is in a member of her own sex."¹⁸ The term "homosexual woman" is more frequently used in research, while "lesbian" is most commonly used in a derisive way by members of society in general. In recent years, however, lesbian feminists have begun wearing the "lesbian" label proudly. The word "lesbian" comes from the life and poetry of Sappho who lived about 2600 years ago on the Isle of Lesbos. Sappho's poetry represents the first recorded expression of love between women. Lesbian love as expressed in her poems is "a sophisticated love, a love of beauty, grace and charm. The emphasis of her poetry is on the sensuous power of aesthetic love."¹⁹ Because of the apparent beauty of Sappho's love, lesbian feminists today are proud to be called lesbians. Consequently, the word "lesbian" is losing the alienating power it once had, and is being used more and more in research to describe a homosexual woman.

2. Identity

"Identity is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic

¹⁸Martin and Lyon, p. 1.

¹⁹Charlotte Wolff, Love Between Women (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 11.

between individual and society."²⁰ Identity is the self or the ego that is formed as a result of the interaction between the individual and the environment within which that individual lives. Erikson refers to ego identity as being characterized by a "sense of the reality of the self within social reality."²¹ Of course, a complete definition of identity would include such things as the questioning of previously accepted beliefs, rapid physiological and psychological development, choice of vocation, commitment to a worthwhile ideology, the struggle for independence in relation to parents, and so on, but the focus here is on the issue which the writer believes is central in the development of identity - the individual's relationship to her/his society.

3. Personal Identity

Personal Identity, as used in this study, is that which comes about during the period of primary socialization. As a child grows up, personal identity emerges as a result of "a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification, between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity."²² One gradually comes to know who one is. If one is able to resolve the crises of the childhood stages of the life cycle successfully, one emerges from childhood into adolescence with an inner sense of self-worth. If, on the other

²⁰Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 174.

²¹Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle, p. 149.

²²Berger and Luckmann, p. 132.

hand, one is not able to resolve the childhood crises, one emerges with an inner sense of inferiority and guilt.²³ Personal identity, then, involves the inner sense one has of oneself.

4. Social Identity

Social identity also can be said to emerge as a result of "a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification...",²⁴ but, as used here, it is that which comes about through secondary socialization. Secondary socialization, or the forming of social identity, involves the learning of specific roles and the internalizing of specific labels, so that a person who wants to be a doctor learns what the role "doctor" means in her/his society and is gradually socialized into that role. An adolescent female learns what it means to be a woman and is gradually socialized into her "place" in society. A homosexual learns what the label "homosexual" means in a heterosexual society, and slowly internalizes that meaning. The formation of social identity, i.e., who one perceives oneself to be in the eyes of society and the "place" one ought to occupy, always occurs after personal identity has been formed.

G. A DISCUSSION OF IDENTITY CONFLICT

This whole study began as a result of my observation, already mentioned, that homosexual women generally take longer than other

²³Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle, pp. 50-94.

²⁴Berger and Luckmann, p. 132.

women to resolve the crisis of identity. Before moving into the dissertation proper, therefore, it seems important to discuss here in some detail the probable reason for this prolonged identity struggle. George Herbert Mead points to the crux of the problem when he talks about the difference between the "I" and the "me." He says:

The "I" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the "me" is the organized set of attitudes of others which one [herself] himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized "me," and then one reacts toward that as an "I."²⁵

From this it can be seen that the reason for the homosexual woman's prolonged identity struggle is the split she experiences between the "I" and the "me," or to put it another way, the split she experiences between personal identity and social identity.

Berger and Luckmann speak of "harmonizing the sense one makes of one's biography with the sense ascribed to it by society,"²⁶ but for a lesbian there is the frustration of trying to do that when society continually shows her a picture of herself as someone to be shunned. Regardless of how healthy and integrated she may feel herself to be, the prevailing opinion in society is the one that says: A lesbian is sick; a lesbian is a sinner; a lesbian is anti-social; a lesbian is deviant; a lesbian is an outsider. In the face of such a picture of herself, therefore, she finds it impossible to reconcile the kind of person she knows she really is, with the kind of person

²⁵George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 175.

²⁶Berger and Luckmann, p. 82.

society purports her to be. This is the conflict between personal and social identity.

1. Personal Identity

What personal identity is and how it is formed needs to be examined more closely, and that will be done in this section with reference first to Berger and Luckmann and then to Erikson.

The period when personal identity is initially²⁷ formed is that period when Berger and Luckmann's "primary socialization" takes place. Primary socialization begins at birth when a baby is "born into an objective social structure within which [she] he encounters the significant others who are in charge of [her] his socialization."²⁸ Significant others assist one in "understanding" the world in which one lives and in internalizing it or making it one's own. This internalization of the objective world is the basis for an understanding of other persons and also for an understanding of the social world as a meaningful reality. It should be added, however, that since one's significant others are in charge of one's socialization, the objective world which one internalizes will be prejudiced by the standards, the role-expectations, the attitudes held by those significant others. The learning that takes place, therefore, is not just cognitive learning. It is learning that takes place in the context of a highly charged

²⁷The word "initially" is used here as a reminder that there is never a time when personal identity is fixed. It is always in process from the beginning of life to the end.

²⁸Berger and Luckmann, p. 131.

emotional identification. The world of one's significant others becomes one's own world emotionally and cognitively. A child is "given" an identity and receives a ready-made system of values, attitudes, and prejudices. Heterosexuality is almost always one of those values.

One of the most difficult situations an adult lesbian must come to terms with stems from the fact that because she was born as a result of a heterosexual union, in almost²⁹ every instance the partners in that union, her parents, are basically heterosexually oriented. In other words, heterosexuality is given an important place in the value system of her parents, and consequently during primary socialization, it became part of her own value-system without question. This is usually the beginning of what is destined to become a tremendous conflict for one who later on will become aware of her own definite homosexual tendencies. In other words, when heterosexuality is the value that is internalized during primary socialization, secondary socialization will bring with it extreme conflict for a lesbian. This point will be expanded later when the concept of "social identity" is dealt with.

While Berger and Luckmann point to the development of identity

²⁹The word "almost" is important here as a reminder that while most women and men involved in heterosexual relationships are heterosexually oriented, there are some who are not. One or both partners in a heterosexual union could be basically homosexual. On the one hand, there are those homosexuals who, because of a strong desire to be parents, choose to become involved with a person of the other sex for a limited period. Then, after the birth of the desired number of children, their homosexual life-style is resumed. On the other hand, there are those who are basically homosexual but who live in partial or total denial of that fact by immersing themselves in a heterosexual life-style.

through the socialization process, Erikson sets out certain psychosocial crises that need to be resolved in order that a healthy identity may be formed.

Erikson's eight stages of the life cycle are: 1) Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust; 2) Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt; 3) Initiative vs. Guilt; 4) Industry vs. Inferiority; 5) Identity vs. Identity Confusion; 6) Intimacy vs. Isolation; 7) Generativity vs. Stagnation; 8) Ego Integrity vs. Despair.³⁰ The healthy personality, he says, is the one that moves through each of these stages resolving the crisis of each stage at the "right time" and moving on to the next in accordance with the epigenetic principle.³¹

By the fifth stage, personal identity is largely formed. The healthy personality has emerged from each crisis of the life cycle with a renewed sense of self-worth. The healthy personality feels a certain degree of continuity with the past and a confidence that she/he will continue to feel accepted and acceptable. Personal identity, then, involves the inner sense one has of oneself. Normally, it can be presumed that the sense one has of oneself at adolescence - i.e., one's personal identity - will persist in varying degrees throughout the remainder of one's life. For some, however, there follows a period when everything they had come to believe about themselves is seriously shaken. This is certainly true of most lesbians. It does not take

³⁰ Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950) pp. 247-74.

³¹ David Rapaport, "A Historical Survey of Psychoanalytic Ego Psychology," in Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle, p. 15.

long for one to become aware of the great gap that exists between the kind of person one knows oneself to be and the kind of person society purports one to be. In other words, it is realized early that one's social identity is very different from one's personal identity.

In the next section, following a general discussion of social identity, it will be seen that the personal identity of a lesbian is often seriously affected by her social identity, and that this fact is basically responsible for the prolonging of the resolution of the identity conflict.

2. Social Identity

During middle and late adolescence when questions of vocation are of vital concern, one is caught up in the struggle to find one's "place" in society. The forming of social identity, or as Berger and Luckmann call it, secondary socialization, occurs at this time. It is at this time that a person sees who she/he is in the eyes of society, and begins to internalize specific labels and learn appropriate roles. When one chooses a vocation, there is a new language to be learned, new relationships to be understood, new attitudes to be appropriated. One is socialized into one's role as doctor, engineer, secretary, or whatever vocation one chooses.

More important for our present study than the socialization that takes place into one's chosen role, is the socialization into one's given "group" in society. In order to look more closely at the homosexual "group" and what it means to be a member of that group, it will be helpful to begin by examining first what is meant by the

"typifying process" and the way in which the dynamics of typification work to separate a homosexual from the rest of society. Then, by looking at the way in which typification by society becomes self-typification, it will be clear that one's personal identity can be drastically affected by one's social identity.

a. Typification. Alfred Schutz used the word "typification" extensively. In his Studies of Social Theory he discusses the everyday typifications which structure the life-world by making a comparison with face-to-face situations. In a face-to-face situation, he says, human beings grow older together, experiencing each other's "Here and Now," but as soon as one leaves, the two become mere contemporaries. They no longer share the same Here and Now. The one can only experience the other by imputing to the other certain typical attributes. For example, if the other is a student, she/he can be pictured at a certain time of the day going to class, at another time eating lunch, at another time going to bed, and so on. It is not that one has direct knowledge of what one's friend is doing, but that one is aware of that as being typical behavior for the kind of student one knows one's friend to be. Thus, the only way it is possible for a person to apprehend the contemporary, according to Schutz, is by means of typifications.³²

John McKinney, in his article "Typification, Typologies, and Sociological Theory," says it in a similar way by pointing out that

³²Alfred Schutz, Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory (Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), p. 42.

the whole of the social world is structured by types: types of people, types of activity, etc. - these types being formed "largely through taking over in the socialization process the typifications people habitually assume under given conditions."³³

Berger and Luckmann, on the other hand, refer to the typifications constructed by members of a social system in terms of "socially shared universes of meaning."³⁴ These universes of meaning, they say, are learned in the socialization process as objective truth and thus internalized as subjective reality.³⁵

An individual, then, is born into a world of socially shared universes of meaning, or typifications, which are automatically accepted as one's own, and the typification of one's neighbors is a natural and necessary part of life if there is to be any experience of each other outside the face-to-face encounter.

Schutz goes on to point out that there are degrees of directness experienced in relationships with one's contemporaries. I am in a social relationship, he says, not only with the persons with whom I have had a face-to-face encounter, but also with other contemporaries whom I do not experience in any direct way, e.g. post office employees. Though I do not know the post office employees personally, I act with the expectation that certain kinds of conduct are typical for them.

³³John C. McKinney, "Typification, Typologies, and Sociological Theory," Social Forces XLVIII (September 1969) 1-2.

³⁴Berger and Luckmann, p. 65.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 67.

What I actually do is ascribe to them specific functional performances. I typify them as performers of this and this and this function. They are for me not concrete and unique individuals, but types.³⁶

In Schutz's sense, then, it appears that typification is a necessary part of life, but at the same time he makes it clear, particularly in his essay "Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World," that the very process of typification can also be harmful to the individuality of persons. When a person is typified, it seems that all that makes that person a unique and irreplaceable individual is passed by.³⁷ Some typifications, however, are quite acceptable to Western society, e.g. doctor, professor, male, because they are part of the value system of that culture and are therefore looked upon as being "normal." On the other hand, there are typifications which are not acceptable, e.g. liberated woman, homosexual, drug addict, because they are not part of the value system and are therefore "deviant." Because of the process of typification, then, the whole of society is separated into groups, and to be typified say as "homosexual" is to be separated from "normal" society and placed in a particular "deviant" group. In an attempt to understand how it happens that the homosexual is separated from the rest of society, it is necessary here to look at the concept of group membership.

b. Group Membership. Every child born into the world learns

³⁶ Schutz, pp. 44-5.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 234.

early that she/he is a member of numerous social groups. At birth one automatically acquires the group membership of one's parents. Schutz distinguishes between (i) existential group membership and (ii) voluntary group membership. One has no choice as to one's family membership, one's race, one's nationality, one's social and economic status at birth. Also one has no choice regarding the conception of the world taken for granted by the group in which one's primary socialization takes place. One automatically takes on the values and prejudices of one's parents. These one acquires existentially. On the other hand, as one grows older there are other memberships which may be chosen voluntarily - one's spouse, one's friends, one's occupation, one's business partners, and so on. Also, one is free to change some of the memberships acquired at birth - e.g. nationality, religion, social and economic status, etc.³⁸

To repeat a point that was made earlier, probably the most difficult situation a lesbian must come to terms with stems from the fact that because she is born as a result of a heterosexual union, in almost every instance the partners in that union, her parents, are basically heterosexually oriented. In other words, heterosexuality is given an important place in the value-system of her parents, and therefore it becomes part of her own value-system without question. This is the beginning of what will later become a difficult situation for her.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 250-1.

As a child taking on the values of parents, one learns what it means to be a member of the in-group in society. One learns the norms and values held by one's group, and the structures within which one must live in order to be successful. One learns the differences between the sexes. A boy learns that boys are superior to girls. He learns that boys are strong and aggressive and intelligent, while a girl learns that girls are weak and passive and less intelligent. A boy learns that he is the aggressive initiator in matters relating to sexuality, while a girl learns that her role is that of passive receiver. When both roles are learned "correctly," then it naturally follows that each is made for the other, and the only form of sexual expression acceptable to the in-group is that which is heterosexually oriented.

A lesbian, generally speaking, has learned all this as a child. But that is not all. Together with her learning of the subjective meaning of membership in the heterosexual in-group, she learns also the objective meaning assigned by the in-group to the homosexual out-group. She learns that to digress from the norm of heterosexuality is definitely not acceptable. She learns, however vaguely, that there are some in society who do digress, but that there is a definite attitude she must adopt toward them. These people are unquestionably inferior. To the church, they are sinful; to the law, they are criminal; to the healing professions, they are mentally or emotionally ill. In the eyes of the in-group, if they cannot or will not be "saved" by the church, restrained by the law, or healed by psychoanalysis, they are to be shunned at all costs. Society assigns to

them what Berger and Luckmann have called: "an inferior ontological status, and thereby a not-to-be-taken-seriously cognitive status..."³⁹ They are cast out from the opportunities the social structure offers to those who are "normal." Just to make sure a child understands the attitude she/he must adopt toward the homosexual out-group, society provides and encourages the use of a system of derisive jokes and nihilating names which the child is to learn thoroughly.

As mentioned a moment ago, this whole process of the learning of appropriate attitudes and values presents a difficult problem for a woman who later discovers her own lesbianism. Indeed, it would be impossible to understand fully the trauma experienced when a woman who has learned the extent of society's repulsion and scorn and hatred toward this particular out-group, discovers within herself the same symptoms and slowly realizes her own right to membership in that group. It is no doubt true that as she recognizes the undesirable homosexual tendencies within herself, the repulsion and scorn and hatred she learned to feel toward the group "homosexuals" then become self-repulsion, self-scorn, and self-hatred. The objective typification of the out-group by the in-group has led to self-typification. The following is a more detailed description of the process of self-typification.

c. The Process of Self-Typification. Recent sociological studies of "deviant" behavior lay stress on the interaction which

³⁹ Berger and Luckmann, p. 115.

takes place between the labelers and the labeled.⁴⁰ First, a person is labeled; then, society responds to the label; and finally, the labeled person responds to society's response.

The first step occurs when a person is labeled. Actually society appears to be obsessed with the need to have everyone and everything labeled. It seems necessary not only for the purpose of simplifying incoming stimuli, but also in order that society will know exactly how to respond, because for every label, society has a standard way of acting toward the person or thing so labeled. On the one hand, it may help to simplify the process of interaction, but on the other hand, labeling can also lead to distorted appraisals and a lack of concern with the uniqueness and individuality of persons.⁴¹ This seems to be particularly true when the label in any way implies "deviancy."

The second step in the process occurs when society responds to the label that has been attached to a person. An interesting fact is that a label will have no real effect unless society responds to it. The way society usually responds is by treating the person according to the expectations it has of the whole category of persons so labeled.

In examining society's response to persons labeled "deviant," it will be helpful here to make use of a distinction made by Everett

⁴⁰See Howard S. Becker, Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance (New York: Free Press, 1963); and Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg (eds.) Deviance: The Interactionist Perspective (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

⁴¹J. L. Simmons, "Public Stereotypes of Deviants," Social Problems XIII:2 (Fall 1965) 225.

C. Hughes between master and auxiliary status traits.⁴² Hughes makes reference to statuses that are well thought of in society, but Becker has appropriated the process and used it in relation to "deviant" statuses.⁴³ When a person obtains a "deviant" label, that label becomes her/his master status trait and along with the master trait she/he is usually expected to have the corresponding auxiliary traits. "Possession of one deviant trait," says Becker, "may have a generalized symbolic value, so that people automatically assume that its bearer possesses other undesirable traits allegedly associated with it."⁴⁴ The master status "homosexual" automatically suggests to many people such auxiliary traits as "irresponsible," "untrustworthy," "over-sexed," "child-molester," etc., and society's response to the homosexual often reveals the assumption that he/she possesses all these expected auxiliary traits.

One other important point to be made concerning society's response to a deviant label can be explained best by appropriating another distinction made by Hughes - i.e., the distinction between master and subordinate status traits. Some statuses in society are so powerful that they override all other statuses. Race is this kind of master status. The fact that a black person is a physician, and a male, and middle-class, will be subordinate to the master status.

⁴² Everett C. Hughes, "Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status," American Journal of Sociology L (March 1945) 353-9.

⁴³ Becker, pp. 32-3.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

He is a black first, and everything else that he is, is second. Any deviant status is also a master status according to Becker. "One will be identified as a deviant first, before other identifications are made.... The deviant identification becomes the controlling one."⁴⁵ When one is labeled lesbian, then, society responds by treating that person as if everything else about her person were subordinate to the fact that she is a lesbian. This attitude is evidenced by the fact that a known lesbian is very rarely given the same opportunities or trusted with the same responsibilities as other people. She is "treated as generally rather than specifically deviant."⁴⁶

After a person is labeled and society responds to the label, the third and final step in the process leading to self-labeling occurs when the labeled person responds to society's response. When a homosexual is treated as generally rather than specifically "deviant," it has a tremendous effect on the way one thinks and feels about oneself. Instead of seeing oneself as one actually is, one begins seeing oneself in the image others have of one. At the beginning of this century, C. H. Cooley called attention to this process, which he named the "looking-glass effect." When one looks in a mirror (looking-glass) and sees oneself reflected, one is pleased or displeased with what one sees. One is pleased or displeased according to how one imagines oneself to be perceived by another person. So, Cooley explains, one has a definite imagination of how one appears in another's

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 33-4.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 34.

mind and the kind of self-feeling one has is determined by the attitude one imagines the other person has toward oneself. I feel good or bad about myself according to how I imagine I am perceived by another person.⁴⁷

Gordon Allport's description of the way in which society's continual belittling of a person can slowly induce that person to self-hatred is important here.

A child who finds himself rejected and attacked on all sides is not likely to develop dignity and poise as his outstanding traits. On the contrary, he develops defenses. Like a dwarf in a world of menacing giants, he cannot fight on equal terms. He is forced to listen to their derision and laughter and submit to their abuse.

There are a great many things such a dwarf-child may do, all of them serving as his ego defenses. He may withdraw into himself, speaking little to the giants and never honestly. He may band together with other dwarfs, sticking close to them for comfort and self-respect. He may try to cheat the giants when he can and thus have a taste of sweet revenge. He may in desperation occasionally push some giant off the sidewalk or throw a rock at him when it is safe to do so. Or he may out of despair find himself acting the part that the giant expects, and gradually grow to share his master's own uncomplimentary view of dwarfs. His natural self-love may, under the persistent blows of contempt, turn his spirit to cringing and self-hate.⁴⁸

A further step which inevitably follows from this whole process is that when one sees oneself from the point of view of other people and one's self-love turns into self-hate, one begins acting the way others expect one to act. This is alluded to by Allport

⁴⁷Charles H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), pp. 151-2.

⁴⁸Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954), pp. 142-3. Though it is not my usual practice, I have chosen in this instance to let Allport's sexist language stand, so that the flow of the passage will not be interrupted.

in the above quotation. One of the first things a young lesbian may do is try to find out the kind of behavior that is "typical" of a lesbian. Society says she is irresponsible, untrustworthy, and immoral, and so she thinks of herself as the irresponsible, untrustworthy, immoral person she is expected to be. Immediately, then, there is set up what Robert MacIver has called a "vicious circle."⁴⁹ When one becomes what society expects one to become, society then has something tangible to discriminate about. In this way, the discrimination against lesbians becomes a self-perpetuating discrimination.

The process leading to self-typification, then, begins with the label being attached to a member of an out-group, is followed by society's response to the label, and ends with the labeled person's response, by which one sees oneself from the point of view of society, and often acts the way society expects one to act.

For most lesbians, the conflict is never fully resolved. For many, though, after a prolonged struggle with who they are, there does come a degree of resolution which brings with it a real sense of satisfaction and peace. The stages a lesbian goes through in the process of reaching that point will be set out in the pages to follow.

H. OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

Having discussed the suggestion that the estrangement of the individual from her society is the main reason for the prolonged

⁴⁹ Robert M. MacIver, The More Perfect Union (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 62.

nature of the identity conflict for a homosexual woman, it is time now to move first to a review of the literature on lesbianism, and then on into the main body of the dissertation. Chapter two presents a review of the literature in four important areas: 1) psychological; 2) sociological; 3) theological; and 4) popular.

Chapter three presents a model which consists of the five stages a lesbian progresses through in the development of her identity. The naming of the stages has been done after careful consideration of the theological and psychological significance of the particular response-relationship existing between the individual and her society at that time. Each stage is set out in detail and discussed in relation to its forms of expression and its duration. Following that, the present model is then compared with other models which also make use of developmental stages, namely those of Erik Erikson and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

Chapter four begins with a discussion of H. Richard Niebuhr's model of response ethics. In contrast to deontological ethics which is concerned with the law, and teleological ethics which sets out to achieve some desired goal, it will be suggested that response ethics is totally dependent on the theological concept of grace. The chapter concludes by relating the whole ethical discussion to the situation of a lesbian as she moves from one stage to the next in the development of her identity.

The Case Study in chapter five is followed by an analysis of the case. First the analysis attempts to determine whether or not the five stages set out in chapter three do indeed appear in the

representative case. This is followed by an ethical analysis of the response-relationship at each stage, and is closely related to chapter four.

Following both of these analyses, conclusions will be drawn in the final chapter. Implications for theology and psychology will be pointed out, and recommendations made for further research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON LESBIANISM

A review of the literature on homosexuality reveals an obvious lack of interest in females vis-a-vis males. Most of the literature focusses on male homosexuality with an almost incidental mention of the existence of lesbianism. Comparatively speaking, there have been very few serious studies devoted exclusively to lesbianism up to the present time. Speculating on reasons for this lack of interest on the part of researchers, it has been suggested that the low social visibility of lesbians may account for it.¹ In general, lesbians do not draw attention to themselves in the way male homosexuals do. They have been referred to as "chameleon" creatures who have learned to cover up for their own protection.² Another related speculation is that society simply permits women a greater degree of physical intimacy without disapproval than it permits men.³ Yet another speculation suggests that the reason for the lack of interest in lesbianism is that most researchers are men "who are less likely to take the female homosexual seriously."⁴ Men are primarily interested in

¹Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (ed.) The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society (New York: Dutton, 1963), p. xiv.

²Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, Lesbian/Woman (New York: Bantam, 1972), p. 1.

³Clara Thompson, "Changing Concepts of Homosexuality in Psycho-Analysis," in Ruitenbeek, p. 44.

⁴Martin and Lyon, p. 1.

their own sex, and therefore work with male homosexuals is much more appealing to them. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the few women who are involved in research are probably reluctant to enter into the study of lesbianism for fear of becoming suspect in the eyes of colleagues.⁵

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the study of lesbianism has been largely neglected, a fact which will become more evident as the following review of the literature proceeds. The review will be undertaken in four areas: 1) Psychological studies; 2) Sociological studies; 3) Theological/religious literature; and 4) Popular literature.

Before proceeding, it should be pointed out that my own opinions in relation to the literature under review will be stated in this chapter so that the basic assumptions with which I approach the study of lesbianism will be clear to the reader.

A. PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

1. Etiology

Studies dealing with etiology can be divided into two broadly defined categories. The first category consists of those studies which take the psychoanalytic approach and look to the parent/child relationship to find the cause of lesbianism, while the other consists of those who point to a woman's dissatisfaction with the female role

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

in society.

a. Parent/child relationship. This approach began with Freud who concluded after working with a homosexual woman, that the cause of her homosexual tendencies lay in her experience of the return of the infantile Oedipus-complex during puberty. According to Freud, she had been "impressed" with her brother's genitals at the beginning of the latency period, and at the onset of puberty became keenly aware of a desire within her to have a male child by her father. When it was her mother who gave birth to his child, she became "furiously resentful and embittered, [and] ...turned away from her father, and from men altogether."⁶

Since Freud, there have been many who have looked to the parent/child relationship to find the cause of lesbianism. One researcher, using case histories of psychiatric patients, suggests that some women, after giving up the father-attachment they felt during the Oedipal stage, are unable to form attachments with other men for fear of retaliation from the father.⁷

Of all the parent/child relationship patterns posited by researchers as a cause of lesbianism, the most common seems to be the combination of a domineering, hostile, unaffectionate mother, and a

⁶Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers (New York: Basic Books, 1959), II, 215.

⁷Catherine Lillie Bacon, "A Development Theory of Female Homosexuality," in Sandor Lorand and Michael Balint (eds.) Perversions; Psychodynamics and Therapy (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 131-59.

weak, unassertive, detached or absent father.⁸ However, in a study conducted by Harvey Kaye, et.al., using clinical data obtained from the analysts of 24 homosexual women and 24 heterosexual women, the characteristics of the fathers of the homosexual women differed somewhat from the above, while the mothers remained quite similar. The fathers tended to be puritanical, exploitative, possessive, and in many instances feared by their daughters. Both parents tended to discourage the development of adult feminine attributes in their daughters, which the researchers contend interfered with their feminine identification.⁹ Yet another researcher defines the parent/child relationships in the homes from which her lesbian subjects came as "cruel husband, martyred mother, and angry children."¹⁰

Other reasons for the development of homosexuality in women involving parental influence are said to be: the absence of sex education; misinformation about sex; fear of sex learned from the mother; alcoholism in the father; and knowledge that the father had wanted a son instead of a daughter.¹¹

⁸Eva Bene, "On the Genesis of Female Homosexuality," British Journal of Psychiatry CSI:478 (1965) 815-21; Cornelia B. Wilbur, "Clinical Aspects of Female Homosexuality," in Judd Marmor (ed.) Sexual Inversion: The Multiple Roots of Homosexuality (New York: Basic Books, 1965), pp. 268-81; and Charles W. Socarides, "Homosexuality: Findings Derived from 15 Years of Clinical Research," American Journal of Psychiatry CXXX:11 (November 1973) 1212-3.

⁹Harvey Kaye, et.al., "Homosexuality in Women," Archives of General Psychiatry XVII (November 1967) 626-34.

¹⁰Jan Loney, "Family Dynamics in Homosexual Women," Archives of Sexual Behavior II:4 (1973) 348.

¹¹Frank Caprio, Female Homosexuality (New York: Grove Press, 1954), pp. 121-2.

b. Dissatisfaction with the female role. The suggestion that some women become lesbians because they are dissatisfied with the female role seems to rest on the contention that human nature is bisexual, that is, all persons have the potential for both homosexual and heterosexual functioning. Freud was the first to emphasize the bisexual nature of human existence in any definite way, although he cites others who suggested it before him. He quotes a Dr. Arduin (1900), for example, who said that "in every man [sic] there exists male and female elements," and also G. Herman (1903) who believed firmly "that in every woman there are male, and in every man there are female germs and qualities."¹²

Freud's work in the field of sexual abnormalities led him to question the normality of that form of sexual behavior which society held as normative,¹³ and brought him to the conclusion that in humans as well as in the lower animals, there is an original predisposition to bisexuality.¹⁴ He refers to it again in Civilization and its Discontents when he says: "The individual represents a fusion of two symmetrical halves, of which according to many authorities, one is purely male, the other female."¹⁵

Approaching the study of sexuality from a scientific point

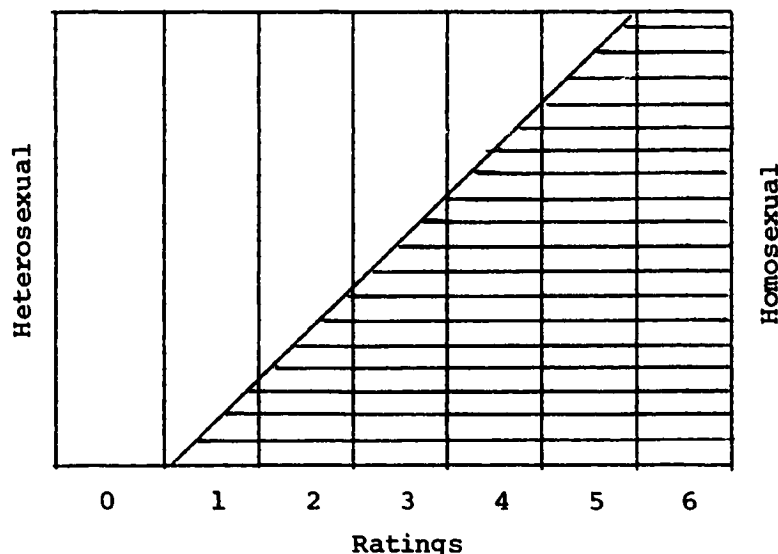
¹²Sigmund Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 559.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 560n.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 558.

¹⁵Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 77.

of view, Alfred Kinsey reached similar conclusions to those of Freud in relation to bisexuality. From his research, Kinsey discovered that "there is a considerable portion of the population whose members have combined, within their individual histories, both homosexual and heterosexual experience and/or psychic responses."¹⁶ It is apparent, he says, that the homosexuality or heterosexuality of many people is not an all-or-none proposition. The world cannot be divided into sheep and goats. The living world is a continuum, which fact Kinsey illustrates with a simple diagram.



Heterosexual-homosexual rating scale

Based on both psychologic reactions and overt experience, individuals rate as follows:

0. Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual
1. Predominantly heterosexual, only incidental homosexual
2. Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidental homosexual
3. Equally heterosexual and homosexual

¹⁶Alfred C. Kinsey, et.al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1948), p. 639.

4. Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
5. Predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual
6. Exclusively homosexual¹⁷

Influenced strongly by Freud's insights and also by Kinsey's findings, it is my opinion that human nature is basically bisexual and that those persons who claim to be totally heterosexual or totally homosexual are the ones whose sexual expression could be said to be "unnatural." Because of a basic predisposition to bisexuality lesbianism is an option that women may choose, and that many women do choose (either consciously or unconsciously) as a protest against the restrictive nature of the female role in society.

The earliest psychoanalyst to espouse this theory was Alfred Adler. Adler's "masculine protest" theory differs from Freud's "penis envy" theory by contending that that which a woman envies is not a man's genitals, but the power and advantages a man has in society by virtue of the fact that he is male. Some women express their protest by refusing to assume a subservient role in relation to men, choosing instead to relate almost exclusively to members of their own sex.¹⁸

Simone de Beauvoir makes a strong case to support her contention that lesbianism "is an attitude chosen in a certain situation - that is, at once motivated and freely adopted."¹⁹ She speaks of a woman's resentment of her role as object over against man's role as

¹⁷Ibid., p. 638.

¹⁸Heinz L. and Rowena R. Ansbacher (eds.) The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler (New York: Basic Books, 1956), pp. 49 and 441.

¹⁹Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 398.

subject. The decision to adopt a lesbian life-style, she says, is one way a woman demonstrates her refusal to accept the passivity and powerlessness and inferiority inherent in the feminine role.

"Growing up female" in Western culture is described by Bruno Bettelheim as "absurd." He refers to the dissatisfaction and frustration experienced by a woman who is encouraged for fifteen years or more to gain a good education, to develop her mind, to take the initiative, to be creative, only to find she is required to give all that up and find "deep fulfillment" in taking care of her husband and his children.²⁰ Such dissatisfaction and frustration with feminine role expectations leads women to seek relationships with members of their own sex, where equality rather than inferiority can be a reality.²¹

In the face of all the different psychological and sociological theories that exist as to the etiology of the phenomenon of lesbianism, it is clear that there is no one cause that can be posited. For every different case there is probably a different cause or sequence of causes.²² Those who look on homosexuality as a mental illness or a personality disorder, however, will probably not be satisfied until a cause has been established, and so it can be expected that the search for a cause will continue long into the future. Such a search, however, seems like a waste of time and energy to those of

²⁰ Bruno Bettelheim, "Growing Up Female," in Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (ed.) Psychoanalysis and Contemporary American Culture (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 170.

²¹ Ibid., p. 178.

²² Thompson, p. 50.

us who accept the fact of the bisexual nature of human existence.

2. Psychological Assessments

The literature which attempts to make an assessment of the health or ill-health of lesbians, the normality or abnormality of lesbianism, can be divided into three categories: (i) Lesbianism as a Mental Illness; (ii) Lesbianism as a Personality Disorder; and (iii) Lesbianism as a Natural Expression of Sexuality.

a. Lesbianism as a Mental Illness. Those psychologists who label lesbianism as a mental illness are few in number. It seems that most of those who consider it an abnormality prefer to call it a "personality disorder," though where the line is drawn between "personality disorder" and "mental illness" is often difficult to detect.²³

Edmund Bergler is probably the most outspoken proponent of the "mental illness" diagnosis. It is a mental disease which ought to be treated, and which in many cases can be cured through psychoanalysis, he believes. He uses words like "psychic masochist," "hypernarcissistic," "hypersupercilious," "more or less psychopathic," to describe a homosexual woman (and man, too).²⁴

²³Richard Green, "Homosexuality as a Mental Illness," International Journal of Psychiatry X:1 (March 1972) 77-98. This article is followed by a discussion by Alan B. Bell, Lawrence Hatterer, Martin Hoffman, Arno Karlan, Judd Marmor, and Charles Socarides.

²⁴Edmund Bergler, Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life? (New York: Collier Books, 1956); and Edmund Bergler, "Lesbianism, Facts and Fiction," Marriage Hygiene I:4 (1948) 197-202.

Another proponent of the mental illness theory refers to lesbianism as a symptom of a "deep-seated neurosis which involves narcissistic gratifications and sexual immaturity,"²⁵ while another speaks of the choice of a same-sex partner as "a phenomenon of the polymorphous-perverseness of infantile sexuality."²⁶

b. Lesbianism as a Personality Disorder. Following Freud's example in his "Letter to an American Mother" in which he stated homosexuality "cannot be classified as an illness," but rather as "...a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development,"²⁷ the majority of psychologists today tend to treat lesbianism as a personality disorder instead of a mental illness.

It is described as an arrest in sexual development,²⁸ "a psychosexual aberration."²⁹ One researcher calls it "a massive adaptational response to a crippling inhibition of normal heterosexual development."³⁰ The Research Committee of the Society of Medical Psychoanalysis, after its study of male homosexuality in 1962, agreed that

²⁵Caprio, p. 120.

²⁶Charles W. Socarides, The Overt Homosexual (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1968).

²⁷Sigmund Freud, "Letter to an American Mother," in Ruitenbeek, The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society, p. 1.

²⁸Eugene B. Mozes, "The Lesbian," Sexology XVIII:5 (1951) 294-9; and XVIII:6 (1952) 384-9.

²⁹May E. Romm, "Sexuality and Homosexuality in Women," in Marmor, pp. 282-301.

³⁰Kaye, pp. 626-34.

male homosexuality is a "pathological alternative" to normal heterosexual development.³¹ Following this, it was suggested by a member of the committee that this same conclusion may also apply to female homosexuality.³² Another researcher contends that "homosexuals are, on the whole, exceptionally disturbed individuals," lesbians being more emotionally disturbed than male homosexuals.³³

c. Lesbianism as a Natural Expression of Sexuality. Much of the research which concludes that homosexual women are mentally ill or emotionally disturbed seems to have been done by psychiatrists or psychologists who have used their patients as subjects for their studies. An interesting fact is that when research is conducted using healthy homosexual subjects, the results are almost always different. A thorough search of the literature has revealed a total of only five psychometric studies using non-clinical subjects. One of those studies supports the traditional belief that homosexual women are emotionally unstable, while the remaining four do not.

F. E. Kenyon distributed a questionnaire for self-administration to 123 non-clinical homosexual women and 123 non-clinical heterosexual women for the purpose of obtaining some basic data on homosexual

³¹Irving Bieber, et.al., Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

³²Wilbur, p. 269.

³³Albert Ellis, "The Effectiveness of Psychotherapy with Individuals who have Severe Homosexual Problems," in Ruitenbeek, The Problem of Homosexuality in Western Society, p. 180.

women.³⁴ He found that the lesbians:

1. had a poorer work record
2. showed a greater rejection of religion
3. had a poorer relationship with their mothers
4. had a poorer relationship with their fathers
5. remembered more instances of unhappiness in childhood
6. more frequently had a psychiatric history of depression

From this, he drew the following conclusion: "The evidence from the present study points towards long-standing personality problems and neurotic manifestations, which, no doubt, can be further exacerbated by social and cultural factors."³⁵

As I see it, Kenyon's study contains one serious weakness, in that while 96 percent of his heterosexual control group claimed to be entirely heterosexual (in accordance with Kinsey's homosexual/heterosexual continuum), only 37.4 percent of the lesbians claimed to be entirely homosexual. Of the 123 women in the lesbian group, 43 were rated by Kenyon himself as either predominantly heterosexual (8.9 percent) or bisexual (6.5 percent) or slightly more homosexual than heterosexual (19.5 percent).³⁶ Such an inconsistency, it seems, casts serious doubts on the reliability of his conclusions.

The other four studies found non-clinical homosexual women to be just as healthy psychologically as non-clinical heterosexual women. Virginia Armon began her research with the hypothesis that overt homosexual women will differ from heterosexual women in certain personality

³⁴F. E. Kenyon, "Studies in Female Homosexuality: IV. Social and Psychiatric Aspects," British Journal of Psychiatry CXIV (1968) 1337.

³⁵Ibid., p. 1342.

³⁶Ibid., p. 1337.

characteristics, but after careful research using Rorschach and Figure Drawing Tests concluded that that was not so. Her research group was made up of 30 homosexual and 30 heterosexual women, none of whom were in therapy. At the conclusion of her research, she stated: "With female homosexuals we must...conclude that, in the majority of cases, they cannot be distinguished from heterosexuals on the basis of projective test performance...."³⁷

In 1968, M. J. Freedman pursued research "based on the assumption that there is no a priori connection between homosexuality and psychological disturbance."³⁸ The research group, consisting of 62 members of the Daughters of Bilitis (a lesbian group) and 67 heterosexual members of a women's service organization, were asked to fill out: 1) a History sheet; 2) a Personal Data sheet; 3) the Eysenck Personality Inventory; and 4) the Personal Orientation Inventory. The result of the tests was that no significant differences were found between homosexual and heterosexual women in a global measure of psychological adjustment. If anything, "the former group looked significantly more self-actualized than the latter group on 6 of the 12 P.O.I. scales," Freedman said.³⁹

Another study was made, in 1969, with 24 non-clinical lesbians and 24 non-clinical heterosexual women. June Hopkins, the researcher,

³⁷Virginia Armon, "Some Personality Variables in Overt Female Homosexuality," Journal of Projective Techniques XXIV (1960) 300.

³⁸M. J. Freedman, "Homosexuality among Women and Psychological Adjustment," Dissertation Abstracts XXVIII (1968) 4294B.

³⁹Ibid.

began with the hypothesis: "...there are no personality factors... which will be statistically significantly different between the lesbian and heterosexual groups."⁴⁰ The subjects were tested by means of Raymond B. Cattell's 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire. Hopkins reports that her hypothesis was not confirmed, for some differences were discovered. "The following terms are suggested," she says, "as appropriately descriptive of the lesbian personality in comparison to her heterosexual female counterpart:

1. More independent
2. More resilient
3. More reserved
4. More dominant
5. More bohemian
6. More self-sufficient
7. More composed.⁴¹

Finally, Marvin Siegelman conducted research in 1972 using 84 homosexual women, 87 percent of whom were not in therapy, and 133 heterosexual women, 93 percent of whom were not in therapy. Several instruments were used to measure 12 dimensions related to mental health, viz., tenderminded, depressed, submissive, anxious, alienated, trusting, goal-directed, self-accepting, sense of self, dependent, nurturant, and neurotic.⁴² His research resulted in a "failure to find female homosexuals more neurotic than female heterosexuals...."

⁴⁰June H. Hopkins, "The Lesbian Personality," British Journal of Psychiatry CXV (1969) 1433.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 1436.

⁴²Marvin Siegelman, "Adjustment of Homosexual and Heterosexual Women," British Journal of Psychiatry CXX (1972) 479.

Indeed, he agreed with Freedman and Hopkins that "...the lesbians are better adjusted in some respects than the heterosexuals...."⁴³

The above studies lead me to the conclusion that when a lesbian is classified as mentally ill or disordered, her lesbianism is generally not the cause. Lesbianism is a natural expression of sexuality, and as such does not indicate a personality disorder.

3. Treatment

Those researchers who see lesbianism as a mental illness or a personality disorder contend that treatment is necessary and a cure is possible. To them, "cure" means helping a lesbian to turn from homosexual attachments and make a satisfactory heterosexual adjustment. The kinds of treatment said to have had some measure of success are long-term psychoanalysis,⁴⁴ psychotherapy,⁴⁵ relationship therapy,⁴⁶ group psychotherapy in a single-sexed group,⁴⁷ and group psychotherapy in a heterogeneous group.⁴⁸

⁴³Ibid., p. 479.

⁴⁴Richard C. Robertiello, Voyage from Lesbos: The Psychoanalysis of a Female Homosexual (New York: Citadel Press, 1959); Wilbur, p. 278; and Bergler, Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life? pp. 182-259.

⁴⁵Ellis, pp. 175-82.

⁴⁶Helgo Aschaffenburg, "Relationship Therapy with a Homosexual: A Case History," Pastoral Counselor IV:1 (1966) 4-12.

⁴⁷John P. Kempf and Erna Schwerin, "Increased Latent Homosexuality in a Woman during Group Therapy," International Journal of Group Psychotherapy XVI:2 (1966) 217-24.

⁴⁸Walter N. Stone, John Schengber, and F. Stanley Seifried, "The Treatment of a Homosexual Woman in a Mixed Group," International Journal of Group Psychotherapy XVI:4 (1966) 425-33.

B. SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES

1. Lesbianism in History

Most of the historical literature available today seems to deal with lesbianism in ancient Greece, though there are documents which reveal the practice of lesbianism in Rome as far back as the 1st Century B.C., and in India during the 1st Century A.D.⁴⁹

The literature dealing with lesbianism in ancient Greece usually dwells at length on the life and poetry of Sappho who is said to have run a kind of boarding school for aristocratic young women on the Isle of Lesbos. Many of her poems were love-lyrics giving expression to the passionate friendships that existed between Sappho and her young disciples.⁵⁰ The terms "lesbianism" and "sapphic love" (as it is sometimes called) reflect this history. Poems by and about Sappho are the main source of information available about her life.⁵¹ One interesting account of her life gleaned from these kinds of sources is that written in 1932 by Arthur Weigall.⁵²

⁴⁹For a detailed listing of these documents, see Alfred C. Kinsey, et.al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (New York: Pocket Books, 1965), p. 477n.

⁵⁰Robert Flaceliere, Love in Ancient Greece (New York: Crown, 1962), p. 95.

⁵¹Mary Barnard, Sappho (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).

⁵²Arthur Weigall, Sappho of Lesbos: Her Life and Times (London: Butterworth, 1932).

2. The Lesbian and Society

Again it must be said that very little has been written about the relationship between a lesbian and her society. What little has been written is usually included as a chapter or a section in a book devoted either to the male homosexual's relationship to society,⁵³ to female sexuality in general,⁵⁴ or to a variety of deviant lifestyles.⁵⁵ Much is made of the fact that social and legal attitudes toward female homosexuality are much more permissive than they are toward male homosexuality.⁵⁶ The Kinsey report lists the following as possible reasons for this situation:

1. In Hittite, Jewish and other ancient cultures, women were socially less important than males, and their private activities were more or less ignored.
2. Both the incidences and frequencies of homosexual activity among females are in actuality much lower than among males. Nevertheless, the number of male cases which are brought to court are, even proportionately, tremendously higher than the number of female cases that reach court.
3. Male homosexual activity more often comes to public attention in street solicitation, public prostitution, and still other ways.
4. Male homosexual activity is condemned not only because it is homosexual, but because it may involve mouth-genital or anal contacts. It is not so widely understood that female homosexual techniques may also involve mouth-genital contacts.

⁵³For example - George Weinberg, Society and the Healthy Homosexual (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972).

⁵⁴Kinsey, Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, pp. 446-501.

⁵⁵Edwin M. Schur, Crimes Without Victims (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

⁵⁶Wardell B. Pomeroy, "Why We Tolerate Lesbians," Sexology XXXI:10 (1965) 652-5.

5. Homosexual activities more often interfere with the male's, less often interfere with the female's marrying or maintaining a marriage.
6. The Catholic Code emphasizes the sin involved in the wastage of semen in all male activities that are non-coital; it admits that female non-coital activities do not involve the same species of sin.
7. There is public objection to the effeminacy and some of the other personality traits of certain males who have homosexual histories; there is less often objection to the personalities of females who have homosexual histories.
8. The public at large has some sympathy for females, especially older females, who are not married and who would have difficulty in finding sexual contacts if they did not engage in homosexual relations.
9. Many heterosexual males are erotically aroused when they consider the possibilities of two females in sexual activities. In not a few instances they may even encourage sexual contacts between females. There are fewer cases in our records of females being aroused by the contemplation of activities between males.
10. There are probably more males and fewer females who fear their own capacities to respond homosexually. For this reason, many males condemn homosexual activities in their own sex more severely than they condemn them among females.
11. Our social organization is presently much concerned over sexual relationships between adults and young children. This is the basis for a considerable portion of the action which is taken against male homosexual contacts; but relationships⁵⁷ between older women and very young girls do not so often occur.

Society is more lenient with lesbians than with male homosexuals, but that is not to say that lesbians do not have their struggles with society. The label "lesbian" carries with it the same kind of stigma in Western society as the label "homosexual," and though the law does distinguish between women and men in its punishment, church

⁵⁷Kinsey, Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, pp. 485-6.

and society do not make such a distinction in their condemnation. This fact is borne out by society's treatment of lesbian mothers. Up to the present time the law has looked on a woman living in a lesbian relationship as an unfit person to bring up her own children. Custody of a lesbian's children is usually granted to the father on the grounds of his heterosexuality with apparently little regard to the question of either partner's suitability as parents.⁵⁸

3. The Lesbian Community

When one speaks of the lesbian community one is speaking of a loosely organized collectivity comprising both overt lesbians who frequent lesbian bars, organizations, restaurants, dances and concerts with varying degrees of regularity, and covert lesbians who rarely, if ever, take part in such activities. Those lesbians who have come out are free to choose the degree of involvement they want to have in the lesbian community. Those who have not come out, on the other hand, seem to satisfy their need for community by meeting together in small groups for private parties, usually in each other's homes.⁵⁹ The lesbian community provides the lesbian with social support, opportunities for sexual contacts, and also a needed sense of group identity.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Martin and Lyon, pp. 141-76; Motive: lesbian/feminist issue XXXII:1 (1972) 52; and Ms. Magazine (October 1973).

⁵⁹Maurice Leznoff and William A. Westley, "The Homosexual Community," in Ruitenbeek, The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society, p. 169.

⁶⁰William Simon and John H. Gagnon, "The Lesbians: A Preliminary Overview," in John H. Gagnon and William Simon (eds.) Sexual Deviance (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) pp. 247-82.

C. THEOLOGICAL/RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The literature which can be called "theological/religious" is reviewed here in three separate groups: Historical/Biblical, Theological/Ethical, and Church. Though these categories have been chosen for convenience and each article is classified according to its main emphasis, it must be remembered there is considerable overlapping in much of the literature.

Before moving into a discussion of the categories chosen, it is important to point out that this section of the dissertation is the only section in which no distinction is made between female and male homosexuality. The reason for this is that I have not been able to find any theological literature devoted exclusively to lesbianism. As a matter of fact, even an article entitled "A Lesbian Approach to Theology" written by two lesbians, was found to deal with the church's attitudes to homosexuality in general.⁶¹ No doubt the reason for this is as expressed in a simple statement by John von Rohr, who says: "Throughout the centuries, Christian theology has condemned all homosexuality as sin."⁶² When discussed as a moral question, homosexuality is simply homosexuality with no distinctions made. While it will be seen, especially in much of the historical literature, that the main focus of attention is on male homosexuality, it would be a mistake to

⁶¹Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, "A Lesbian Approach to Theology," in W. Dwight Oberholtzer, Is Gay Good? (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 213-20.

⁶²John von Rohr, "Toward a Theology of Homosexuality," in Oberholtzer, p. 75. (emphasis mine)

assume that homosexuality is somehow more acceptable in women than in men. The church's condemnation has been and is for all who participate in homosexual behavior.

1. Historical/Biblical

By far the most comprehensive treatment of the subject from an historical perspective is that by Derrick Sherwin Bailey published in 1955.⁶³ One of Bailey's stated aims in taking the historical approach is to bring about a more sympathetic public opinion which he feels would undoubtedly occur if the history of the development of the present attitude to homosexuality were more widely known. Beginning with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which he believes is the basis of so much of the church's present attitude to homosexuality, he contends that the sin of Sodom appears to be more the sin of "inhospitality" than of "homosexuality." He also contends that if this were widely known, it would no longer be possible for the church to maintain the belief that homosexual acts were once punished by Divine judgment, nor would it be possible for the church to hold to the belief that an act of God has determined once and for all what the church's attitude to homosexuality should be.

After discussing in some detail Old and New Testament references to the subject, he goes on to deal with the attitudes and writings of the Church Fathers, Roman Law, legislations of church councils,

⁶³Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition (London: Longmans, Green, 1955).

the church's penitential system, the teachings of theologians and ministers, to mention just a few of the issues he raises.

A review of the historical/biblical literature would be incomplete without some mention of the references to homosexuality in the Judeo-Christian tradition from the story of Sodom to the present time.

a. Old Testament. Actually there are only two passages in the Old Testament which make definite mention of homosexual acts. They are both to be found in the "Holiness Code" of Leviticus and both refer to homosexual behavior among males:

Lev. 18:22--"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination."

Lev. 20:13--"If a man...lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

There are five other passages which, while not making definite reference to homosexual behavior, do seem to suggest a homosexual interpretation in the English language. They are:

Deut. 23:17-18--"There shall be no harlot of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the wages of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow; for even both these are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."

1 Kings 14:22-24--"And Judah did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord....For they also built them high places, and pillars, and Asherim, on every high hill, and under every green tree; and there were also sodomites in the land; they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord drove out before the children of Israel."

1 Kings 15:12--Asa,"...put away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his father had made."

1 Kings 22:46--"...the remnant of the sodomites, which remained

in the days of his father Asa, (Jehoshaphat) put away out of the land."

2 Kings 23:7--In his efforts to stamp out idolatry, Josiah "...brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were in the house of the Lord...."

b. New Testament. In the New Testament, there appear four definite references, three refer to homosexual behavior between males:

Rom. 1:27--"...the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working un-seemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due."

1 Cor. 6:9-10--"...Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Tim. 1:9-10--"...law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly...for abusers of themselves with men...."

and one refers to homosexual behavior between females:

Rom. 1:26-27--"...God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working un-seemliness...."

Two references which are sometimes regarded as having some bearing on the subject are found in the Book of Revelation:

Rev. 21:9--"But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

Rev. 22:15--"Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."

One other reference that is often thought to suggest a homosexual interpretation is that found in Ephesians:

Eph. 5:12--"...the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of."

c. The Church Fathers. Homosexual behavior is usually mentioned by the church fathers only as it fits into discussions of the "right" use of sexual intercourse. According to both Augustine and Aquinas, the proper end or purpose of sexual intercourse is procreation, and any kind of sexual behavior that is for any other purpose is a sin. Augustine mentions homosexual acts only very briefly, and refers to them as "offenses against nature."⁶⁴ Aquinas goes into it in slightly more detail, and he also uses the term "against nature." However, he refers to all sexual acts that are indulged in for pleasure and not for reproduction as "against nature" - intercourse between husband and wife where procreation is not the purpose; bestiality; homosexuality; etc. - because he says, there is an unlawful and "inordinate discharge of semen."⁶⁵ He compares it with the sin of murder "whereby human nature is deprived of actual existence."⁶⁶ No mention is made of homosexuality between women.

Others of the church fathers do refer to homosexuality, but usually only in commentary of the Genesis story or of Romans 1:26-27. Clement, for example, refers to the punishment of the Sodomites as being an example for us. God punished the Sodomites "to educate us to

⁶⁴St. Augustine, "Confessions and Enchiridion," in Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), VII, 70.

⁶⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, The Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas III:2 (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1928), p. 113.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 114.

the self-control he wished from us."⁶⁷ Chrysostom, commenting on Romans 1:26-27, connects it with the Sodom story. Referring to the destruction of Sodom as a result of that which was "contrary to nature," he says: "Consider how great is that sin, to have forced hell to appear even before its time!"⁶⁸

d. Reformation Leaders. The only references to homosexuality in the writings of the leaders of the reformation, again seem to be made in sermons, lectures, or commentaries on the Sodom story or on the Romans passage. It is interesting, as Bornkamm mentions in Luther and the Old Testament, that in the Lectures on Genesis, Luther's comment on the Sodom story is really only a comment on "Lot's decision to deliver his daughters into the hands of the Sodomites."⁶⁹

Calvin, in his commentary on Romans, reveals his obvious lack of interest in the subject. He devotes very little space to commenting on Romans 1:26-27, and his main comment seems to be that these sins of lust were apparently more prevalent in Paul's day than in his own.⁷⁰

Before concluding this historical/biblical section, mention

⁶⁷St. Clement, Christ the Educator, Book III (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), p. 235.

⁶⁸St. Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, Hom. IV (Oxford: Parker, 1948), p. 50.

⁶⁹Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther and the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 21.

⁷⁰John Calvin, The Epistles of Paul and Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), p. 36.

should be made of the work of William Graham Cole who writes about homosexuality in the Bible,⁷¹ and of Robert L. Treese whose essay on homosexuality from a Biblical perspective is one of the most concise and careful treatments of the subject available today.⁷²

Cole speculates as to why homosexuality was judged by both the Hebrews and the early Church as a sin and a crime. With the Hebrews, he says, it could have been due to the fact that all sexual activity was required to be directed towards procreation, but Cole himself favors the theory that traces the objection to religious roots. He points out that because Israel's pagan neighbors "used male cult prostitutes in their exultation of sexuality as the creative principle in nature,"⁷³ the Hebrews would associate homosexuality with idolatry and it would therefore be condemned without question. The early church was influenced in its attitude by the writings of the Old Testament. After reviewing and commenting on all the references to homosexuality in the Bible, Cole concludes by reminding the Christian community of its calling to be "a fellowship of reconciliation, of love and accepting forgiveness."⁷⁴ If the church continues to condemn homosexuality, the homosexual will look elsewhere for the love and acceptance that should be available to her/him from the people of God.

⁷¹William Graham Cole, Sex and Love in the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1960), pp. 342-72.

⁷²Robert L. Treese, Homosexuality: A Contemporary View of the Biblical Perspective (San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1966).

⁷³Cole, p. 343.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 371.

While Cole reminds the church of its responsibility to the homosexual as that of "a hospital for sick souls" where all who are sick may find healing,⁷⁵ Robert Treese makes an impassioned plea for the acceptance of homosexual behavior on equal terms with that of heterosexual behavior. After quoting extensively from Thielicke and Bailey, he goes on to point out that the important issue in sexuality is that of a meaningful "Thou-Thou" relationship. He says: "I must, in the face of the church's 'no,' speak a loud 'yes' to these persons, for I have seen the marks of self-giving Christian love upon their lives."⁷⁶

2. Theological/Ethical

Some significant collections of essays written from theological and ethical perspectives have appeared in recent years in an attempt to help the church come to a better understanding of homosexuality.⁷⁷ Another attempt to help the church gain some degree of understanding was made by H. Kimball Jones in 1966.⁷⁸

Looking at all of the literature, it seems that theologians and ethicists writing about homosexuality can be divided into three

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 372.

⁷⁶Treese, pp. 24-5.

⁷⁷Alastair Heron (ed.) Towards a Quaker View of Sex (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1963); Ralph W. Weltge, The Same Sex (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969); and Oberholtzer.

⁷⁸H. Kimball Jones, Toward a Christian Understanding of the Homosexual (New York: Association Press, 1966).

broad categories: 1) Those who view homosexuality and homosexual behavior as a sin against nature; 2) Those who do not see homosexuality as sinful in and of itself, but who believe homosexual behavior should be avoided if at all possible; and 3) Those who see homosexuality and homosexual behavior as good when it is an expression of love.

Those theologians who come under the first category are generally those who hold to the "natural order" view of sexuality. The most well-known theologian in this category is Karl Barth, who speaks of "perversion, decadence and decay" when referring to homosexuality.⁷⁹

The second category consists of those theologians who are trying to integrate the findings of current medical and psychological research with traditional Christian beliefs about the immorality of any homosexual lifestyle. This presents a problem when the research seems to give proof that homosexuality is not simply a lifestyle chosen in direct defiance of God's laws, but is a natural expression of sexuality for many people. Bailey makes a distinction between the "pervert" and the "genuine invert." Perversion, he says, describes a homosexual act engaged in by a heterosexual person, for which she/he must be held responsible. Inversion, on the other hand, is a condition for which the person cannot be held responsible. There is one crucial point on which Bailey does not commit himself, however, and that is, the moral reprehensiveness of homosexual acts between genuine inverts. He seems

⁷⁹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1961), III/4, 166.

to be saying that while homosexuality as a condition is acceptable, homosexual behavior ought to be avoided if at all possible.⁸⁰

Similarly, Thielicke prefers that the "constitutional homosexual" strive to sublimate her/his homosexual desires because homosexuality is, in his opinion, a distortion of the normal created order. He like Bailey, prefers that homosexual behavior be avoided if at all possible. If it is not possible, then he urges that relationships between persons of the same sex be structured in an "ethically responsible way."⁸¹

Those belonging to the third category are those who have allowed current medical and psychological research to challenge and shed some light on traditional theological beliefs about homosexuality. I, personally, stand with this group which insists that it is the relationship between the two persons that matters more than their gender. Typical of the attitude of this category of theologians is the much-quoted statement from the study made by the English Quakers:

One should no more deplore "homosexuality" than left-handedness... surely it is the nature and quality of a relationship that matters....Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and, therefore, we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse.⁸²

One of the most positive statements in this category is that made by Norman Pittenger in his Time for Consent: A Christian's

⁸⁰Bailey, pp. 153-76.

⁸¹Helmut Thielicke, The Ethics of Sex (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 285.

⁸²Heron, p. 36.

Approach to Homosexuality. Whether or not two people love each other is the question to be considered in any ethical discussion of sexual expression.⁸³ Again the quality of a relationship is the important criteria in Robert Treese's study. In his conclusion, he even calls the church to give "spiritual and emotional support" to homosexuals so that "redemptive relationships" may occur.⁸⁴

3. The Church

There is some literature which cannot correctly be called historical/biblical or theological/ethical but which nevertheless deserves at least a mention in this section. This is the literature dealing with the homosexual and her/his relationship to the church.⁸⁵ As a result of the church's attitude of condemnation, homosexuals formed a separate church which has come to be known as the Metropolitan Community Church. The Gay Church, as it is sometimes called, began in 1968 with 12 members, and has grown rapidly since that time.⁸⁶

The first professed homosexual to be ordained in any mainline denomination was William R. Johnson who was ordained to the ministry

⁸³Norman Pittenger, Time for Consent: A Christian's Approach to Homosexuality (London: SCM Press, 1970).

⁸⁴Treese, p. 34.

⁸⁵Donald Kuhn, The Church and the Homosexual: A Report on a Consultation (San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1964); Donald S. Lucas (ed.) The Homosexual and the Church (San Francisco: Mattachine Society, 1966); and M. T. Kelsey, "The Church and the Homosexual," Journal of Religion and Health VII (January 1968)

⁸⁶Ronald M Enroth and Gerald E. Jamison, The Gay Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

of the United Church of Christ in 1972.⁸⁷ Since then, the only other known homosexual to be ordained is Ellen Marie Barrett, a lesbian who was recently ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal church.⁸⁸

D. POPULAR LITERATURE

Most of the literature on lesbianism coming out of the Women's movement is both personal and political. One of the earliest works was Lesbian/Woman by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. Other literature seeks to discuss lesbian/feminist theory,⁸⁹ to expose myths about lesbianism,⁹⁰ and to examine oppression.⁹¹ Also feminist anthologies often include at least one article on lesbianism.⁹²

E. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature on lesbianism has been reviewed

⁸⁷W. Evan Golder, "Ordaining a Homosexual Minister," Christian Century LXXXIX:25 (June 28, 1972) 713-6.

⁸⁸Ms. Magazine (April 1977) 20.

⁸⁹Jill Johnston, Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); and Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, Sappho was a Right-on Woman (New York: Stein and Day, 1972).

⁹⁰Bettie Wysor, The Lesbian Myth (New York: Random House, 1973); and Delores Klaich, Woman + Woman (New York: Morrow, 1974).

⁹¹Ruth Simpson, From the Closet to the Courts (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

⁹²Robin Morgan (ed.) Sisterhood is Powerful (New York: Random House, 1970); Joanne Cooke, Charlotte Bunch-Weeks, and Robin Morgan (eds.) The New Women (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1970); and The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Our Bodies, Ourselves (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

in four areas: psychological, sociological, theological/religious, and popular. The literature in psychology has been found to be concerned with the etiology of lesbianism, the assessment of the condition either as a mental illness, a personality disorder, or a natural expression of sexuality, and to some extent the treatment of the condition.

It was found that very little has been written from a sociological perspective, though it is recognized by sociologists that lesbians as well as male homosexuals suffer from society's stigma. Also, it is admitted by sociologists that lesbians, too, have a great need to feel the support of their own community.

The theological and religious literature deals with homosexuality in general, so no distinction was made in the review of this literature between females and males. From an historical/biblical perspective it was seen that homosexuality has always been condemned in the Judeo/Christian tradition. Even at this present time in history, there are theologians and ethicists who condemn homosexual behavior as a sin against nature. It was suggested that they are the theologians and ethicists whose minds are virtually closed to the influence of modern psychological and sociological research, preferring to continue believing what they have always believed. In their emphasis on natural law and orders of creation they see anything that is against the law as "unnatural." The law exists for them, not to be changed, but to be obeyed. There are others, however, who are open to changing their long held beliefs. Some are willing to accept the condition of homosexuality but feel that homosexual behavior ought still

to be avoided, while others see homosexuality and homosexual behavior as good for those who love each other.

Finally, it was seen that the popular literature on lesbianism coming out of the Women's movement is both personal and political.

All of the literature reviewed speaks in its own way to the subject being considered here: the development of identity in a lesbian. In the next chapter, each of the stages suggested in the introduction will be set out in detail, and the words used to name the stages will be seen as having been chosen for their psychological and theological significance.

Chapter 3

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY IN A LESBIAN

"A lesbian proceeds through the stages of Awareness, Denial, Anger, Acceptance and Wholeness/Authenticity, in the struggle to achieve satisfactory resolution of the conflict of identity." This statement was made in the introduction to this paper in the form of an hypothesis to be tested. In an attempt to elaborate in detail on the hypothesis, this chapter will begin by setting out each stage and discussing it in relation to its forms of expression and its duration. The model as set out in the following pages has been formulated by me as a result of several years of exposure to lesbians in counseling situations, in personal friendships, and in the reading of biographies and autobiographies. Following the stages, there will be a brief comparison of the model presented here with two other models that make use of developmental stages, namely those of Erikson and Kübler-Ross. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the psychological and the theological/biblical significance of the stages presented.

A. THIS STUDY'S MODEL

1. The Stages

Stage 1: AWARENESS. The stage of awareness is that time in a lesbian's life when she begins to realize "something about me is different."

a. Phases of Awareness. There seem to be three phases in the

Awareness Stage, though it would be impossible to judge where one phase ends and the next begins. First, there is what might be called *pre-awareness*, which is characterized by a woman's "doing what comes naturally." This phase usually occurs during early adolescence when, according to psychologists, same-sex attraction is a natural part of the developing sexuality of all persons prior to making the final adjustment to the other sex as sex-object choice.¹ Regardless of whether a lesbian commits herself to a lesbian life-style at adolescence or at a somewhat later stage in life, it is generally true that the "pre-awareness" phase is experienced during early adolescence. Most adult lesbians can remember a time when they were attracted to a member of their own sex, either a peer or an older woman. Whether or not this attraction was accompanied by actual sexual expression is not important. The fact is there was same-sex attraction and it was a natural phase.

The second phase is the phase of *initial awareness*. This usually occurs for lesbians at about the same time as other women are becoming aware of their growing interest in members of the other sex. The lesbian's initial awareness as mentioned above takes the form of: "Something about me is different." Del Martin describes it this way: "I knew I wasn't reacting as others did, but I thought I was the only one to feel this way and I kept it to myself."² It is during this

¹Clara Thompson, On Women (New York: Basic Books, 1964), p.108.

²Kay Tobin and Randy Wicker, The Gay Crusaders (New York: Coronet Communications, 1972), p. 48.

phase that lesbians begin searching for some explanation for their feelings and/or their behavior. Their reading and their questioning lead them into the third phase of awareness, which is: *awareness of society's condemnation of lesbians and lesbian behavior.*

The third phase is often accompanied by a sense of bewilderment that that which feels so natural to the lesbian is at the same time that which is condemned by her society. Bewilderment, frustration, guilt, anguish are some of the experiences which prompt a lesbian to seek counseling during this phase. Counseling which views lesbianism as a viable life-style will aim at helping a lesbian come to some level of understanding of what it means to live as a lesbian in a patriarchal, heterosexual society. What is required during this phase is the kind of counseling that provides support and affirmation, as well as some well-informed teaching about the relationship between society and those persons society labels "deviant." Unfortunately, much counseling does not view lesbianism as a viable life-style. In a study undertaken by Phyllis Chesler, all lesbians interviewed indicated that they had been treated as "sick" in private therapy,³ and that the aim of the therapy was to make them "well," i.e., heterosexual.⁴

This is the kind of counseling which encourages denial and which makes it difficult for a lesbian to move beyond the denial stage

³Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Avon Books, 1972) p. 193.

⁴Ibid., p. 194.

in the development of her identity. Before moving on to discuss denial, however, it is necessary to conclude this discussion of the awareness stage by looking at the question of duration.

b. Duration. As mentioned above, the "pre-awareness" phase usually occurs during adolescence when interest in members of one's own sex is seen as natural. The first phase is usually followed closely by the other two phases of awareness. By late adolescence, then, the stage of awareness has usually given way to the stage of denial.

An interesting fact about the awareness stage is that if a lesbian's denial is strong enough, the awareness she experienced can be blotted out from her consciousness altogether--at least for many years, if not for the remainder of her life. This means there is a strong possibility that the phases of "initial awareness" and "awareness of society's condemnation" will be repeated for many lesbians at some time later in life, giving way possibly to another brief period of denial, followed usually by a period of intense anger. This point will be more easily understood after the following discussion of denial.

Stage 2: DENIAL. The stage of denial follows as a direct result of one's awareness of the stigma attached to the label "lesbian" in western society, and can be characterized by the words: "Not me!"

a. Forms of Denial. The most common form of denial is: *immersion of oneself in a societally acceptable alternative to the point of ignoring the existence of lesbianism as a phenomenon in society.* Many women, after having become aware of lesbian tendencies within

themselves, single-mindedly point themselves in the direction of heterosexual marriage, believing that involvement in marriage, home, and family will "solve their problems." Others dedicate themselves to a life of celibacy, believing that devoting themselves to "higher things" will bring peace of mind. Then there are other life-styles in which lesbians immerse themselves in an attempt to deny the truth. Admittedly they are not as acceptable to society as marriage or celibacy, but they are nevertheless more acceptable than lesbianism. One is a lesbian's attempt to "prove" her heterosexuality by moving promiscuously from one man to the next, while another is pregnancy outside marriage with the aim of devoting one's life to one's child.

Another form of denial is: *taking a strong stand against same-sex relationships while immersing oneself in one of the life-styles mentioned above.* Women who indulge in this form of denial devote an inordinate amount of time to ridiculing and condemning same-sex relationships. They set out to prove, on religious or moral grounds, the immorality of lesbian interest and behavior. In this way, it seems they are able constantly to deny to themselves any awareness of their own lesbian tendencies.

A third form of denial is: *refusal to admit one's lesbianism to oneself even in the face of continued lesbian liaisons.* The situation of these women is identical to that pointed to by Jean-Paul Sartre in his illustration involving a male homosexual.⁵ A cycle is

⁵Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 63.

set up: a lesbian becomes sexually involved with another woman--feels guilty--repents and promises herself she will never do it again--experiences forgiveness and cleansing--"slips into" another lesbian involvement--feels guilty--and so the cycle continues. In the face of all this, a lesbian employing this category of denial refuses ever to admit: "I am a lesbian." Sartre calls it "bad faith."

It needs to be said here that each of the three forms of denial mentioned above represents persons living in "bad faith." The denial is not simply denial to other people. It is a deep-seated denial to oneself of that which one knows to be the truth. In other words, it is a denial of one's own true self and a refusal to let oneself be.

b. Duration. The duration of the stage of denial varies from a moment to a lifetime. As the Women's Movement places more and more emphasis on the need for women to support and appreciate and trust each other, and as women are being educated to value the close relationships they have with each other, more women than ever before are open to the possibility of loving, sexual involvements with other women. Such openness, which comes as a result of informed teaching or counseling about lesbianism, minimizes the need for denial. Consequently, for some, the denial stage is very brief. It must be said, however, that with women who have been "successfully" socialized into western culture there is never an instance when denial in some form or other is non-existent.

For some, the denial stage may last from a few months to a few

years, during which time they flirt with and often experiment with other forms of sexual expression.

Others deny their lesbianism until they have satisfied the expectations put upon them by society. They marry. They give birth. They raise their children as lovingly and responsibly as they are able. Then, when their children are older and move away from home, and when they find themselves face to face with a husband with whom they have lived as dependent servant for many years, denial seems no longer possible. When acknowledgement of one's own personhood seems a possibility, a woman usually begins listening to her own body and mind. She enters the stage of awareness as if for the first time. She may or may not remember the awareness she denied many years before. There may be a brief period of denial caused generally by a fear of the unknown or a fear of that which is not socially acceptable but usually the anger stage is entered with very little hesitation. Divorce follows quickly. Then, with a certain amount of relief after 20-25 years of denial, she is free to pursue relationships with women.

Finally, there are those for whom the denial stage lasts for the remainder of their lives. This group of women includes those who commit suicide to escape the cycle mentioned earlier. It also includes those who prefer to live out their lives in a socially accepted role that never quite fits, rather than suffer the discomfort of living their lives in conflict with society.

Stage 3: ANGER. Toward the end of the denial stage, when a lesbian cannot or will not deny her lesbianism any longer, she enters the

stage of anger. This does not mean the denial stage is ended altogether. As will be seen shortly in a discussion of the overlapping of the stages, denial persists for a time alongside anger.

For many lesbians, the anger is expressed at first in terms of "Why me?" but later changes to "Why won't society accept me?" For others, particularly those whose awareness is renewed after many years of marriage, the anger is focussed against the structures of a patriarchal society which force a woman into a role she does not want, keep her there for a large part of her life, and make her believe it is for her own happiness and fulfilment. Later on in the stage, this group's anger at society expands to include anger at society's unwillingness to accept and value the lesbian and the style of life she has chosen.

When the focus of the anger changes, as it does for both groups mentioned above, to include anger at society for its non-acceptance of lesbians, self-acceptance is not very far away. It is a sign that a person is moving rapidly toward the stage of acceptance.

a. Forms of Expression of Anger. The expression of anger by lesbians takes different forms throughout the stage. Those who enter the stage with the question "Why me?" tend to experience a seething kind of anger, directed in a somewhat vague way at God or parents or the older generation or society. Their anger is expressed by withdrawing. It is at this time that many lesbians leave home, break ties with the church, and keep pretty much to themselves. Those whose anger is at society's opposition of women, express their anger verbally and non-verbally in anti-male and anti-establishment terms.

A fairly common form of expression of a lesbian's anger in the early part of the stage is complete immersion in society's stereotype of a lesbian. This involves an overacting of the "dyke" role--strong "butch" image, masculine movements, masculine dress, sexual promiscuity, loud and boisterous personality. Such acting-out as an expression of anger is done sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Those who consciously "thumb their nose" at society in this way usually adopt this life-style for a very brief period, while those who are not conscious of why they are acting this way often get stuck there and are unable to progress beyond it.

b. Duration. Once a lesbian enters the anger stage, her anger will persist throughout the remainder of her life, a situation that will continue as long as patriarchal society continues in its present oppressive form. The only way a lesbian can escape her own anger is to regress to the denial stage but this is not a satisfactory option for most. Most lesbians choose to live in the midst of their anger, realizing that though the anger will never fully "go away," its intensity will vary with changing circumstances of life. Many lesbians seek counseling at this stage in the development of their identity and are enabled to discover creative ways of being with and expressing the anger they feel.

Stage 4: ACCEPTANCE. When a lesbian feels free enough to admit to feeling angry at her situation, and then to express the anger she feels toward society, she is already on the way to self-acceptance. The very expression of her anger is an indication that she believes

she deserves better treatment. It is as though she is beginning to say within herself: "This is who I am, and it's okay."

a. Phases of Acceptance. Many lesbians begin the stage of acceptance in a way that speaks of resignation rather than positive self-acceptance. They resign themselves to the inevitable. While merely accepting one's fate certainly cannot be seen as a sign of positive self-acceptance, it is nevertheless a form of acceptance. For many, this phase is a necessary first step toward a more complete acceptance of the self.

The next phase occurs when a woman actually says the words: "I am a lesbian." To admit this to oneself is a difficult step for many, but a necessary one in the movement toward full self-acceptance. For some, the phase that follows is equally difficult, and that is to admit to another person with no apology and no justification: "I am a lesbian." It must be pointed out that this kind of admission is very different from one that might be made in the denial stage: "I think I am a lesbian. Please help me." In this phase of the acceptance stage, one is saying: "I am a lesbian. I accept myself as a lesbian. I want you to accept me too."

The final phase is that of positive self-acceptance, something that only appears possible when a lesbian experiences positive acceptance from another person or group, and/or is able to accept the fact of God's acceptance. Characteristic of this phase of the acceptance stage, however, is a degree of compartmentalizing. Though one may fully accept one's life as it is and feel good about it, there is often

a need to keep different aspects of one's life separate from each other. For example, a lesbian may be a different person socially with her "gay" friends from the "straight" person she is during working hours. Again she may be a different person when she is with her family compared with when she is by herself. Compartments have been set up for her own security, and usually a lesbian can live this compartmentalized existence with a certain measure of fulfilment. Many do, though not without a great psychological and emotional drain on their lives.

Three things need to be said at this point about the relationship between the stages of denial, anger and acceptance. First, it must be said that the beginning of the acceptance stage cannot in actuality be separated from the end of the denial stage. When a lesbian begins expressing anger about her situation she has already begun to make the transition from denial to acceptance. The initial phases of the acceptance stage, therefore, often occur when one is most intensely involved in the anger stage. Secondly, lesbians who never move to the final phase of acceptance, i.e. positive self-acceptance, are still virtually in the denial stage. Finally, a lesbian is more likely to move quickly from denial to acceptance if she has been able to deal openly and honestly with her anger. As a matter of fact, when a lesbian vacillates between denial and acceptance as some do for a large part of their lives, it is usually due to the fact that she has not allowed herself to experience the anger stage as fully as she needs to. When the anger is dealt with, positive self-acceptance is more likely.

b. Duration. Once a lesbian experiences positive self-acceptance, it usually lasts to some degree for the remainder of her life. As a result of the negative messages she receives constantly from society, though, there are occasions when the self-acceptance of even the most stable lesbian is at a low ebb. Though she may need to lean heavily on her support group during these times, her self-acceptance will persist.

Stage 5: WHOLENESS/AUTHENTICITY. It needs to be said at the outset that the fifth stage is quite different in character from the other four. It could even be considered by some to be an unnecessary step in a study which is dealing specifically with the development of identity. Indeed, it has already been stated that a lesbian can live in the final phase of the stage of acceptance with "a certain measure of fulfilment." (See p.76) It is my opinion, however, that the question of one's identity cannot be resolved fully until one goes a step beyond acceptance. What to call that "step beyond," though, has been difficult, for there are many "words" involved in the experience of the fifth stage. The words "wholeness" and "authenticity" have been chosen as those words which best represent the two important facets of this final stage, and which most effectively incorporate the other words. "Transcendence" is a word that was considered, for in this final stage there is a definite rising above and a pulling together of the compartments of one's life into a unified whole. "Integrity" is another word that describes the coming together of the parts of one's life into a healthy whole. Consequently, both transcendence and

integrity are involved in the use of the word "wholeness."

The wholeness that is experienced by those lesbians who progress beyond the stage of acceptance can be described as a steady coming together of the parts of one's life into an integrated whole. It must be stressed here, though, that the compartments do not disappear. Given the attitudes of society and the desire a lesbian feels to relate to her society, there will probably never be a time when the compartments she has set up in her life can be done away with completely. The wholeness that exists is a wholeness that emphasizes "mutuality between diversified. . . parts."⁶

Another word that was considered was the existentialist word "intentionality" which suggests a deliberate choosing of one's life. Also "responsibility" was thought to be appropriate in that it incorporates the notion of one's responsiveness to a larger society as well as one's responsibility for one's own life. Both intentionality and responsibility are expressed in the use of the word "authenticity."

The lesbian who lives in the mode of authenticity is the one who on the one hand realizes and accepts the fact of the absolute aloneness of decision-making with respect to her own life and death, and who on the other hand makes decisions fully cognizant of the fact of her membership in a larger society. In other words, there is both an individual⁷ and a communal dimension in all situations confronting

⁶Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 80.

⁷The German equivalent is Eigentlichkeit, from the word eigen= own.

the authentic lesbian. The lesbian who reaches the final stage in the development of her identity is aware that she has a responsibility both to herself and to her society. How can she relate authentically to her society while continuing to relate authentically to herself? She can criticize, she can defy, she can attempt to change society's norms, but she knows she cannot ignore society's norms, for they are part of her life. In ways that are impossible to identify, they have helped make her the kind of person she is. The authentic lesbian, then, will realize the extent to which she is bound up with society and will accept society's judgment of her as "deviant." Then the question will become: "How can I as 'deviant' relate authentically to a society which refuses to accept me, while continuing to relate authentically to myself?" One important element involved in a lesbian's relating authentically to society is the recognition on her part that she is a feminist in a radical sense. The life-style she has chosen represents a radical departure from accepted patriarchal structures, and therefore, in her attempt to relate authentically to society, she needs to recognize and be aware of the challenge she presents. I would go so far as to say that the lesbian who refuses to see herself as radically feminist will not be able to enter fully into the stage of wholeness/authenticity. In the development of her identity it will not be possible for her to progress beyond the acceptance stage.

The lesbian who is relating authentically to herself chooses her life in every moment, and takes full responsibility for the choices she makes.

a. Choices. One choice she makes and realizes she must continue to make throughout her life is the choice between being true to herself or not. The authentic person chooses always to be true to herself.

Another realization that comes to a lesbian at this stage is the fact that her particular life-style is a chosen one. It is not one that has been forced upon her. During any of the previous stages, a lesbian could bemoan the fact that she had no choice but to enter into same-sex relationships due to the fact that for whatever physiological or psychological reasons, heterosexual functioning was not satisfying to her. During the stage of authenticity, however, a lesbian is aware that she made a choice. She chose lesbianism over heterosexual functioning. She chose lesbianism over celibacy. She realizes she is a lesbian because she chose to be.

A third choice a lesbian is aware of during this stage is the one concerning her visibility as a lesbian. Will she "come out" or not? After weighing carefully the advantages and disadvantages of such a step, both for herself and her society, she makes a responsible choice one way or the other.

b. Duration. When a lesbian reaches this stage in the development of her identity, it is almost certain that she will continue living as a whole and authentic person for the remainder of her life. The word "almost" is included because the importance of a support group cannot be ignored. It is recognized that any lesbian who attempts to live for an extended period without some kind of support is

in danger of losing touch with her own sense of wholeness and authenticity. Such a situation, however, would be extremely rare at this stage.

2. Source of the Stages

It must be reiterated that the stages as conceived by the writer and expressed in the context of this paper, are clearly stages in the development of identity. They are not stages in the development of the self (as in Mead's work), nor are they stages in the development of the life cycle (as in Erikson's work), nor should they be confused with levels of moral development (as in Kohlburg's work).

As stages in the development of identity they arise out of the individual's search for identity. More particularly, they arise out of the lesbian's realization that the kind of person she knows herself to be is not acceptable in the eyes of society. As she searches for some satisfactory resolution of the question of her identity in relation to a hostile society, she moves sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, through the five stages set out above.

3. Time Element

The stages a lesbian goes through in the search for identity can begin to occur at any age after the onset of puberty. There are those whose awareness begins at early adolescence and who move through the stages from that point; there are those whose awareness reawakens after having experienced an unsatisfactory marriage, or unsatisfactory heterosexual relationships over a period of time; and there are those

whose awareness reawakens after having spent years of their lives alone, not interested enough in heterosexual relationships to seek them.

The stages occur in sequence. In some lesbians, it may appear that they move from Stage 2 (denial) to Stage 4 (acceptance) and then to Stage 3 (anger). This is not an uncommon progression, but what is actually taking place in such a situation can be described as a returning to take care of "unfinished business." The acceptance stage cannot be fully experienced until one's anger has been acknowledged and expressed. By returning to face the fact of her anger, a lesbian frees herself to proceed toward full self-acceptance.

There is an overlapping of stages. When a lesbian bypasses the stage of anger and then has to return to it, it is often the case that she will proceed in the stages of anger and acceptance simultaneously. As a matter of fact, it is true that all the previous stages exist to some degree in each of the subsequent stages. Awareness exists in the denial stage, though it is certainly not apparent to those whose denial is complete. Awareness and denial exist in the anger stage. Awareness, denial and anger exist to varying degrees in the acceptance stage. In the final stage, the stage of wholeness and authenticity, there exists awareness, anger, and acceptance, with an occasional tendency toward denial.

Retreating to a previous stage is also a common occurrence when one's situation becomes difficult to manage. Usually, the movement is from anger to denial, or from partial acceptance to denial. Such situational retreat, however, does not usually interfere seriously

with the growth process in the development of one's identity. The more serious retreat is that which could be called total retreat. This involves one's whole life and usually results in a life of total denial.

Finally, there is no set time a person spends in a particular stage before moving on to the next. A lesbian may stay at a certain stage for a few days or for most of her life before progressing to the next stage. The situation also exists where a lesbian gets "stuck" at a stage and never progresses beyond it. The stage of denial seems to be the one where this is most likely to happen, though it is not uncommon to be stuck at the anger stage or the stage of acceptance.

B. COMPARISON WITH OTHER MODELS

1. Erikson

The model presented in this paper differs from Erikson's model in several significant respects. First, Erikson's stages are stages of the life cycle, and though the stage which he calls "identity vs. identity confusion" receives a great deal of attention in his writings, it is nevertheless only one of his eight stages.⁸

Other differences involve the source of the stages and the time element. Erikson's stages are epigenetic, i.e. they arise out

⁸Though I have not undertaken a study of a lesbian in relation to Erikson's other stages, I have no reason to doubt that her development through his other stages occurs in a similar way to that of a heterosexual woman in similar circumstances.

of the organism and come to a peak at a somewhat set time in a person's life.⁹ The time-table seems to be:

Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust	.. From birth to 15 months (approx.)
Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	.. From 15 months to 2½ years (approx.)
Initiative vs. Guilt	.. From 2½ years to 6½ years (approx.)
Industry vs. Inferiority	.. From 6½ years to puberty
Identity vs. Identity confusion	.. Puberty and Adolescence
Intimacy vs. Isolation	.. Young Adulthood
Generativity vs. Stagnation	.. Middle Adulthood
Ego Integrity vs. Despair	.. Later years ¹⁰

Similarities do exist between Erikson's model and the one presented here. These include the sequential nature of the stages, the overlapping of the stages, the possibility of a person's retreating to a previous stage, and the existence of all the previous stages in each of the subsequent stages.

2. Kübler-Ross

A basic difference between the model presented here and that of Kübler-Ross is that the stages she presents are the final stages in a person's life, stages which begin when one knows or suspects one is

⁹David Rapaport, "A Historical Survey of Psychoanalytic Ego Psychology," in Erik H. Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle (New York: International Universities Press, 1959), p. 15.

¹⁰Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), pp. 247-74.

dying.¹¹

Another difference involves the source of the stages. In "Kubler-Ross's model the stages arise out of a person's need to cope with distressing information about herself/himself. Indeed, she refers to the stages as "coping mechanisms."¹² With respect to timing, it has already been stated that Kubler-Ross's stages begin when one knows or suspects one is dying. The similarities are the same as those mentioned between Erikson's model and the one presented here. In all three models, the stages occur in sequence, there is overlapping of the stages, a person may retreat to a previous stage, and all previous stages exist to some degree in each of the subsequent stages.

C. PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STAGES

The naming of the stages in this study has been done after careful consideration of the psychological and the theological/biblical implications of each word. A brief look at the significance of the words chosen is necessary here as a means of supporting their use in a study which claims to be both psychological and theological.

Their significance in the field of psychology is as follows:

1. Awareness

The word "awareness" is employed in psychology to mean the

¹¹"Kubler-Ross's stages are: Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance.

¹²Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, On Death and Dying (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 37.

conscious perception of something either external to the bodily condition or within one's own body. The emphasis here is on the word "conscious." When one is in a state of awareness, one is conscious of some event, or experience, or object.¹³

2. Denial

Denial is a defense mechanism employed by the ego when the present facts of one's life become "too painful to accept or too difficult to cope with."¹⁴ There is a withdrawal from reality and a refusal to acknowledge the existence of certain facts. The denial of reality is similar to repression and isolation.¹⁵

3. Anger

Anger, fear, and love are sometimes grouped together as the three primary emotions of humankind.¹⁶ Anger is "an intense emotional reaction elicited by threat, interference, verbal attack, overt aggression or frustration...",¹⁷ and is often accompanied by attack responses.

¹³Benjamin Wolman (ed.) Dictionary of Behavioral Science (New York: Van Nostrand, Reinhold, 1973), p. 38.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵H. J. Eysenck, et.al., Encyclopedia of Psychology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) III:123.

¹⁶Howard C. Warren (ed.) Dictionary of Psychology (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 13.

¹⁷Wolman, p. 26.

4. Acceptance

Acceptance is characterized by "a positive (approaching) attitude...",¹⁸ toward ideas, toward other people and toward oneself. Maslow speaks of self-acceptance as one of the most difficult achievements of personality for most adults,¹⁹ but names it as one of the elements of psychological health.²⁰

5. Wholeness/Authenticity

Wholeness. The concept of wholeness, in psychological study, is used to refer to a balanced, healthy personality. In Erikson's view, "wholeness emphasizes a sound, organic, progressive mutuality between diversified functions and parts within an entirety, the boundaries of which are open and fluid."²¹

Authenticity. In existentialist psychology, authenticity or authentic existence is defined as the mode in which a person assumes the responsibility of her/his own existence. By way of contrast, inauthenticity is that mode of existence in which one gives oneself over to the tyranny of the crowd.²²

¹⁸Warren, p. 3.

¹⁹Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 133.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 153-5.

²¹Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, pp. 80-1.

²²Henri F. Ellenberger, "A Clinical Introduction to Psychiatric Phenomenology and Existential Analysis," in Rollo May, Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology (New York: Basic Books, 1958), p. 118.

D. THEOLOGICAL/BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STAGES

Each of the words chosen in this study represents a theme running through both the Old and New Testaments. In the interest of brevity, however, the biblical examples given below are confined to references to some of the prophets and also to some of the words of Jesus. Where the word represents a theme in contemporary theology, that is also indicated.

1. Awareness

From the writings of some of the prophets, it is obvious that they had a distinct awareness of God's call before they became prophets to God's people. Moses became aware of God's call when he witnessed the burning bush. [Exodus 3:2-6] Amos became aware of it while tending his sheep in Tekoa. [Amos 7:15] Isaiah's awareness came in a vision he had of the temple. [Isaiah 6] The words of Jesus that best reveal his own awareness of who he was are those words he spoke in the synagogue after having read the following prophesy from Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. [Luke 4:18-19]

Following the reading, he said: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." [Luke 4:21]

2. Denial

Moses attempted to deny the fact that he had been called by

God. He protested in several ways. First, he said: "Who am I that I should go to Pharoah, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" [Exodus 3:11] Again he protested: "...they will not believe me or listen to my voice...." [Exodus 4:1] Then a third time he cried: "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech and of tongue...send, I pray, some other person." [Exodus 4:10 and 13] Isaiah made a similar attempt at denial. He said: "...I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...." [Isaiah 6:5] Probably the most blatant example of denial is that of Jonah who, having heard the call of God to go to Nineveh, "rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." [Jonah 1:3]

Jesus spoke of the denial of the people of Jerusalem when he stood and wept over that city. No matter how many times he had tried to reveal himself to them as the Son of God, their denial of him remained firm. He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" [Matthew 23:37]

3. Anger

Throughout the book of Amos, God's anger against the transgressions of God's people is expressed in no uncertain terms by the prophet. Isaiah, also, paints a picture of God "burning with... anger." [Isaiah 30:27] Jonah expressed his own anger at God quite openly. He spoke of himself as being "...angry, angry enough to die." [Jonah 4:9] Jesus revealed his intense anger during his action of cleansing the temple. As he chased money-changers out of the temple

along with those who sold and those who bought, he cried: "My house shall be called a house of prayer...but you have made it a den of robbers." [Mark 11:15-17]

Anger is a theological theme appearing contemporarily in the writings of feminist theologians in particular. Mary Daly speaks of anger as that which can "trigger and sustain movement from the experience of nothingness to recognition of participation in being."²³

4. Acceptance

With the prophets Moses, Amos, Isaiah and even Jonah, there came the time when they accepted God's call and gave themselves to the work of prophesying in God's name. Acceptance was demonstrated by Jesus, too, when he finally accepted himself as the one who should die in order that God's will would be made more clear. In the Garden of Gethsemane, after pleading with God for his life, he was finally able to say: "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." [Luke 22:42] He accepted the way of the cross as the only way to the ultimate fulfillment of his life.

Acceptance is a theological theme highlighted in the work of Paul Tillich. In Courage to Be he speaks of "the courage to accept acceptance." Acceptance by God is a fact, but before God's acceptance can make a difference in one's life, one must have the faith and the courage to accept it.²⁴

²³Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 43. ²⁴Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 155-78.

5. Wholeness/Authenticity

Wholeness. Though the word "wholeness" is used very little in the Old Testament, wholeness in the sense of "returning to God" or "being filled with the spirit of God," is a major theme. A vivid example is Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones which came to life when God's spirit was breathed into them. [Ezekiel 37:1-14] In the New Testament (King James Version) Jesus used the word "whole" to indicate health. To the woman who touched the hem of his garment he said: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." [Matthew 9:22]

Wholeness, in terms of androgyny, or gynandry, is a theme in the theology of some feminists. Mary Daly refers to "the emerging woman...casting off role definitions and moving towards androgynous being."²⁵ Finding the word "androgyny" unsatisfactory, Janice Raymond speaks of "a vision of integrity" and urges women to see the importance of "...laying claim to a wholeness that is rightfully ours to begin with..."²⁶

Authenticity. God's messengers in the Old Testament often exhorted people to choose between available alternatives. They were not going to be forced to be faithful to God or to do things God's way. They were free to choose. The words Joshua spoke to the Israelites illustrate this: "...if you be unwilling to serve the Lord,

²⁵Daly, p. 41.

²⁶Janice Raymond, "The Illusion of Androgyny," Quest II:1 (Summer 1975) 64.

choose this day whom you will serve...." [Joshua 24:15] The prophet Isaiah speaks of the child, Immanuel, who, when he comes, will know how to "refuse the evil and choose the good." [Isaiah 7:15]

Jesus referring to himself as the Good Shepherd, tells his friends that he will soon lay down his life for the sheep. With a great sense of authenticity and integrity, he says: "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." [John 10:18]

Both wholeness and authenticity are themes running through Kierkegaard's The Sickness Unto Death, though he uses different words to describe them. He refers to the self in whom despair is completely eradicated in terms of a "conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God."²⁷

E. SUMMARY

The way in which a lesbian moves through certain stages in the development of her identity has been demonstrated in this chapter. The stages as presented are: Awareness, Denial, Anger, Acceptance and Wholeness/Authenticity. The source of the stages is the lesbian's search for resolution of the identity conflict brought about by the severe discrepancy that exists between her personal and social

²⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 162.

identities.

In the model presented, the stages occur in sequence. Also there is overlapping of the stages, the possibility of a lesbian's retreating to a previous stage, and the existence of all previous stages in each of the subsequent stages. There follows a brief comparison with the models of Erik Erikson and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross.

Finally, as a means of supporting the use of the words chosen to name each stage, I have described first, the psychological significance, and secondly, the theological/biblical significance of each word.

Chapter four will concern itself with the second hypothesis presented in the introduction to this study, which means it will deal basically with the theological/ethical issues involved in the development of identity in a lesbian.

Chapter 4

A DISCUSSION OF RESPONSE ETHICS

It is no doubt obvious to the reader that the fifth and final stage of the model presented in chapter three is seen by me as the ultimate stage - the one that transcends all the others - in a lesbian's struggle to achieve resolution of the identity conflict. Actually, I see the state of wholeness and authenticity as the ultimate state for all persons in the development of identity, but the lesbian's path to attaining that state is peculiar to her, simply because of her unusual relationship to society.

To repeat what was given mention in the introduction (p.10), the lesbian's relationship to society differs from that of a male homosexual or of a heterosexual feminist in that the lesbian has two strokes against her, while they each have only one. First, as a lesbian, her relationship to society is different from that of a male homosexual simply because she is a woman and he is a man. She is already an oppressed member of society by virtue of the fact that she is a woman. Already that is one stroke against her. Secondly, as a lesbian, her relationship to society is different from that of a heterosexual feminist in that she chooses not to relate sexually to men - at least not in terms of a primary relationship. Since heterosexuality is one of the most valued standards of patriarchal society, her sex-object choice is another stroke against. Consequently, in her relationship with society, she is twice stigmatized. Her journey toward wholeness and

authenticity, therefore, is necessarily influenced by that peculiar relationship, and how she understands that relationship at each stage in the development of her identity.

Attention is focussed in this chapter on the second hypothesis as set out in the introduction: "Successful resolution of the prolonged identity crisis experienced by a lesbian begins to occur when she moves from a deontological-ethical stance to a teleological-ethical stance, and is fully resolved when she begins operating out of the theological ethic of response." (p. 6) It will be suggested that at each stage in the development of identity, a lesbian is operating out of a particular ethical mode, and that the mode out of which she operates at the stage of wholeness and authenticity is the theological-ethical mode of response.

As a matter of fact, correspondent to my belief previously stated that the stage of wholeness and authenticity is the ultimate stage in the development of a lesbian's identity, I believe also that the theological-ethical mode of response is the ultimate ethical position required in order that the stage of wholeness and authenticity may be a possibility. In fairness to the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, however, it must be reiterated that Niebuhr himself makes no such claim. His work, especially The Responsible Self, has simply provided me with a basis on which I have built, and from which I have drawn my own conclusions.

The purpose of this chapter is to set out H. Richard Niebuhr's ethic of response and compare that with the ethics of deontology and teleology, with a view to preparing the way for the theological-ethical

analysis of the representative case which is to follow. First, Niebuhr's model will be discussed with reference both to theology and to ethics. Then, the comparison with deontological and teleological ethics will be made, with particular reference to the theological assumptions on which each is based. Finally, the preceeding discussion will be related to the situation a lesbian is in with respect to her developing identity.

A. H. RICHARD NIEBUHR'S RESPONSE ETHICS

Many of Niebuhr's concepts have been defined most clearly by James Gustafson. It will be helpful to begin this section with some of those definitions.

1. Definitions

a. Theology/ethics. According to Gustafson, Niebuhr compared theology and ethics in this way: "Theology, he often said, is reflection on the action and nature of God; ethics is reflection on the response of man [sic.] to the action and nature of God."¹

b. The Moral Life. Gustafson interprets Niebuhr's definition of the moral life to be "a life of response to Being in its ultimate form and to God's action upon us through the agencies of finite beings."²

¹James M. Gustafson, "Introduction," in H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 40.

²James M. Gustafson, "Christian Ethics and Social Polity," in Paul Ramsay (ed.) Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 121.

Then he goes on to say: "The moral life is...lived in a network of relationships."³

c. Response. "Response is more than a subconscious reaction to an external factor. It is a self-conscious personal relationship to institutions, persons, facts, principles, and Being itself."⁴

2. Niebuhr's Theology

a. The Theocentric Nature of Niebuhr's Theology. In the sense that Niebuhr's starting point is God and not Jesus Christ, his theology can be said to be theocentric rather than Christocentric. The basic theological problem he addresses is the fact that persons stand face to face with the God who is ultimate Power. In this relationship, they are powerless to escape God's awful Presence and unable to avoid God's power over their lives.⁵

God is not only Power, however. God is also Goodness, and God as Goodness is revealed in the event of the coming of Jesus Christ. It is the unity of God's power and goodness that expresses the true nature of God. Christology, then, is a vital part of Niebuhr's theocentric theology, but he makes it clear that it is not central. He strongly protests against "the substitution of Christology for theology,

³Ibid., p. 122.

⁴Ibid., p. 12.

⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Nature and Existence of God," Motive IV (1943) 45.

of the love of Jesus Christ for the love of God and of life in the community of Jesus Christ for life in the divine commonwealth."⁶

The theocentric nature of Niebuhr's theology is evident also in his emphasis on radical monotheism. In a radically monotheistic faith, the center of value is the principle of being itself - God. All being has worth, he says, as it pertains to the principle of being.⁷

Central to Niebuhr's theology as well as to his ethics is the triadic relationship that exists between God, the self, and the neighbour. The focus is on God in relation to the self and the neighbour, and on the self and the neighbour in relation to God.

b. The Nature of God. Niebuhr paints a picture of God as Power, as Goodness, and as the One who acts in and through the events of everyday life.

When referring to the Ultimate Power which is God he uses many different names in an attempt to describe it. "We may call it the nature of things," he says, "...fate...reality...[the] law of things... [the] way things are...the 'void' out of which everything comes and to which everything returns."⁸ He calls it "the secret of existence by virtue of which things come into being, are what they are, and pass

⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 44.

⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 32.

⁸ Niebuhr, "The Nature and Existence of God," p. 45.

away....It is the source of all things and the end of all....the supreme reality with which we must reckon."⁹ In the event of Jesus Christ, God's hostile power is exhibited in its most extreme form. "Here we confront the slayer....,"¹⁰ says Niebuhr. The hostile power of the slayer is revealed in the "crucifixion, the betrayal of Jesus Christ, who was utterly loyal to Him."¹¹

It is in the event of Jesus Christ, also, that one confronts the absolute goodness of God, for "...here we become aware that this slayer is the life-giver."¹² It is in Jesus Christ that the enemy "is recognized as friend."¹³ Faith becomes a possibility, and with the gift of faith, one's eyes are opened to the grace of God. One is enabled to see God as the Unifier, the One who is worthy of trust, "the affirmer of our being."¹⁴ The One beyond the many becomes the One in the midst of the many.¹⁵

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 254.

¹²Niebuhr, "The Nature and Existence of God," p. 46.

¹³Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁴Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, p. 119.

¹⁵It is at this point that I am aware of the unmistakable feminine quality inherent in Niebuhr's theology of God. Most traditional masculine theology presents God primarily as the transcendent One, the One who stands above creation, the outsider who impinges upon human life, the One beyond the many. Niebuhr, however, presents God as all in all, the Unifier, the all-embracing Unity, the One in the midst of the many. It is no doubt for this reason that Niebuhr's theology still speaks to me with tremendous power when other male theologians have little to say to me that seems relevant to my experience as a woman.

God is Power; God is Goodness; and finally, God is the One who acts in and through the events of everyday life. God is active in the world. God is the initiator of all action. Through the gift of faith it is possible for one to understand and see that, "whatever is, is good, affirmed by the power of being, supported by it, intended to be, good in relation to the ultimate center...."¹⁶ God is active in the world for good.

c. The Nature of Human Existence. In describing the nature of human existence, Niebuhr speaks of the self in absolute dependence, the self in society, the self in historical context, and the self in relation to sin and salvation.

To illustrate the absolute dependence of the self he speaks of two things which remain uninterpreted even after everything else is understood. One is "the radical action by which I was cast into this particular historical, religious process," and the other is "the action by which I am."¹⁷ The self is powerless to live and powerless to die, and therefore there is a need for the self to respond in some way to the ultimate power, the One, the Maker, the Slayer.

The self is also a social being. According to Niebuhr, the self only knows itself as known in the I-Thou relationship.¹⁸ Mention needs to be made again of the importance of the triadic relationship in Niebuhr's theology. It is important not only for an adequate understanding of God but also for an adequate understanding of human

¹⁶Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 111-2.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 73.

existence. The self exists in relationship with God and the neighbour.

Referring to the self in historical context Niebuhr argues that although one cannot rely on past decisions nor live the present in the future, one is, nevertheless, not acting in a non-historical present. The present is filled with memories and influences of the past, as well as with aspirations and anticipation of the future. He speaks of the "self's ability in its present to change its past and future and to achieve or receive a new understanding of its ultimate historical context."¹⁹ When a person sees her/himself in historical context, that person is more likely to be able to accept the past and be freed from it, and then to anticipate and make decisions about the future as a free and responsible person.

Sin, in Niebuhr's understanding, is represented by "internal division and conflict."²⁰ The self who tries to be responsive and responsible to many different laws and systems instead of to the principle of being itself, lacks a center of personal integrity. There is no unity, no wholeness, no integrity. Salvation, on the other hand, is represented by the terms unity, wholeness and integrity. The emphasis is on the self finding its center. Niebuhr says: "...the responsible self finds its unity in its explicit responsiveness to the deed by which it is a self, one I among all its roles..."²¹ One is not centered, one is not a whole and responsible self, until one has

¹⁹Ibid., p. 101.

²⁰Ibid., p. 137.

²¹Ibid., p. 125.

faced up to the action of God on one's life, interpreted it, and given one's answer.²²

3. Niebuhr's Ethics

In developing his ethic of response Niebuhr has endeavoured to avoid the difficulties presented in deontological and teleological ethics but does not disregard them entirely. As a matter of fact he admits that the one who lives in obedience to the law and also the one who is future-directed are both responders in their own way.²³ What he is doing, therefore, with his model of response ethics, is pointing out other ways of responding to action upon the self--ways which he seems to be saying will more likely result in unity, wholeness and integrity.

Niebuhr sets out four elements involved in his response ethics: a) Response; b) Interpretation; c) Accountability; and d) Social solidarity.

a. Response. He speaks of "the understanding of ourselves as responsive beings, who in all our actions answer to action upon us in accordance with our interpretation of such action...."²⁴ It is imperative, he says, that responsible selves "try to think of all our actions as having this character of being responses, answers, to actions upon us."²⁵ As a person acknowledges the One in the many, or to

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 136.

²⁴Ibid., p. 57.

²⁵Ibid., p. 56.

put it another way, as a person becomes a responsible self, that person becomes aware of the following affirmation: "God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his [sic.] action."²⁶ God is seen as the initiator of all action. The task of the person of faith, therefore, is to see what God is doing and respond to it appropriately and responsibly.

b. Interpretation. In the making of decisions, a responsible self attempts to answer the question: "What shall I do?" by asking the prior question: "What is going on?" This question in the mind of the person of faith incorporates another question: "What is God doing in this situation?" The question: "What is going on?" is essentially a question of interpretation. What the responsible self is asking here is: What is going on within me? What is going on within the other person/s involved? What is going on in this particular situation? In order to answer the interpretive question, self-knowledge and self-understanding are imperative. One must be aware of past and present influences upon one's own life. One must be aware of one's own tendencies and biases. One must be aware of one's own patterns of interpretation, knowing that one will always respond to any situation in accordance with one's own interpretation of it.²⁷ "Interpretation ...is not simply an affair of our conscious, and rational, mind but also of the deep memories that are buried within us, of feelings and

²⁶Ibid., p. 126.

²⁷Ibid., p. 62.

intuitions that are only partly under our immediate control."²⁸

Awareness of what is going on in other persons, as well as interpretation of the total situation, are more likely to be correct when one is aware of, and accurately interpreting, the meaning of one's own responses.

c. Accountability. In asking the question: "What shall I do?" the responsible self is actually asking: "What is the 'fitting' response?" The responsible self does not have the security a deontologist and a teleologist have when faced with a situation that requires a response. The deontologist responds always in terms of the law, while the teleologist responds in terms of her/his goal; but the responsible self's response is always relative to the situation at hand. A concrete decision must be made in every concrete situation, with the realization that there is usually not one right way. So the question is: What is fitting? What is appropriate in this concrete situation?

An important element the responsible self is aware of with every decision is the element of risk. The decision must be made, and once made, cannot be taken back. Realizing her/his accountability, the responsible self sizes up the situation very carefully before taking the risk involved in decision-making. While interpretation of a situation involves a looking backwards, accountability involves a looking forward, anticipating all possible responses to one's own response.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., p. 63.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 64-5.

After the decision is made, the responsible self takes full responsibility for her/his decision. Even when one makes a decision in consultation with another person or group, one is aware that responsibility for such decision is totally one's own. The responsible self stays with her/his decision and accepts the consequences, both positive and negative.

It is at this point that a student of Niebuhr becomes aware of the fact that Grace is the theological assumption implicit in his response ethics. It is the knowledge that grace is available that enables the self to take the risks involved in making the "fitting" response. The unconditional grace of God frees the self to act knowing that forgiveness is freely available. Through grace, the responsible self has the power to act creatively and redemptively in any situation.³⁰

d. Social solidarity. In every situation, the responsible self is aware of the fact that the self is not an isolated individual and that any particular situation is not an isolated situation. The self "exists in responses...to others who as Thou's are members of a group in whose interactions constancies are present in such a way that the self can interpret present and anticipate future action upon it."³¹

³⁰This does not mean that the responsible self is necessarily "religious" in the traditional sense of the word. As Niebuhr points out: "...the reinterpretation of existence [represented by the ethic of responsibility] ...is not confined to those who say, 'Lord, Lord,' nor even necessarily best represented by them." (Ibid., p. 144)

³¹Ibid., p. 78.

Responsibility implies the continuity of the self in the community of persons to which response is being made. The responsible self decides and acts always in awareness of the mode of interpersonal interactions acceptable in her/his society.³² Social solidarity, i.e., continuity of the self within a continuing community of persons to which response is being made, is integral to the ethics of response.

B. COMPARISON WITH OTHER ETHICAL MODELS

1. Deontology

An important element in response ethics is the self's struggle to clarify requisites. Before any decision can be made responsibly, the self seeks to understand the norms, the rules, the laws impinging upon the situation, but for the response ethicist that is just a beginning. For her/him, the question still remains: "What is fitting in this particular situation?" The deontologist, on the other hand, responds to every situation with a view to the law. "What is the law?" is the initial concern, and response to any situation is determined by the answer to that question.³³

One of the important contributions of deontology is its reverence for law and order. It is well known that law and order are required in a society in order for it to survive. If there is not

³²It is important to note that deciding and acting "in awareness of..." does not necessarily imply deciding and acting "in accordance with..." what is acceptable to society.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 53.

some ordered way of making decisions and some incentive to keep the law, there will be chaos and ultimately extinction. Similarly, there needs to be order in the lives of individual persons. Some norms are required in order to meet the minimal conditions of humanness.

Deontology is concerned with basic requirements of humanness, or put even more simply, deontology is concerned with basic needs, such as basic physiological needs, the need for security, the need for love, and the need for the valuing of human life. When the question is asked: "What ought I do in the face of this particular situation?" the deontologist turns to the norms, the laws that have been set up for the purpose of protecting the basic meaning of humanness for the majority of the people.³⁴ Concern is for "the Right" rather than for a response that is relevant to a particular person or group in a particular situation.

Theologically, the deontological ethic, which is based on the theological concepts of natural law and orders of creation, is grounded in the doctrine of creation. It holds that, from the beginning, male and female were created for each other, and any departure from this order is "against nature." The law must be understood, and in every situation obedience to the law is what is "right." Made in the image of God, human life has been given as a gift. Therefore, one must do

³⁴One of the most notable deontologists was Immanuel Kant, whose categorical imperative has greatly influenced the field of ethics: "Act always on such a maxim as thou canst at the same time will to be a universal law." (Immanuel Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949), p. 54)

nothing that would violate one's own life or that of others. Biblical support for the deontological view is found in St. Paul's admonition to the church in Rome that they "decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother (or sister)...." [Romans 14:13f]

2. Teleology

Another important element in response ethics is the self's reflection on goals, ideals, ends. Before any decision can be made responsibly there is a need to look ahead and anticipate results, but again, for the response ethicist, that is only part of what is necessary for responsible ethical reflection. The teleologist, however, responds to every situation with a view to some ultimate goal or purpose. "What do I want to achieve? What is my goal?" are the kinds of questions asked by the teleologist, and response to any situation is determined by the answer to those questions.³⁵

Teleology, like deontology, is concerned with basic needs and basic requirements for humanness, but it is concerned with much more than that. Borrowing from Abraham Maslow, it could be said that teleologists are concerned more with growth needs than with basic needs. Such things as self-actualization, the maximization of human existence, new life possibilities, are more important to the teleologist than simply fulfilling the basic requirements of humanness. The difference between the two can be illustrated by using the example of the abortion debate. On the one hand, the "right to life" supporters employ as

³⁵Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, p. 50.

the basis of their argument the deontological notion that one of the basic requisites of humanness is the valuing of human life. On the other hand, the "pro-abortion" supporters argue from a teleological point of view that humanness is much more than organic existence. Humanness, for them, involves the promise of human fulfilment, which necessitates the right of the mother to choose for herself the kind of future she wants. Similarly, when faced with the question of homosexuality, the deontologist refers to the norm of heterosexuality supported by arguments about the order of creation, while the teleologist is concerned with making decisions that would most likely enhance the homosexual's possibilities for human fulfilment.

The teleologist's concern is for "the Good." How can human fulfilment best be achieved? How can the life-possibilities of self and others best be enhanced? How can I make possible that which I know to be the goal of human existence, viz. human fulfilment? The difference between teleological ethics and response ethics as revealed in these kinds of questions is that the teleologist approaches every situation with a goal in mind. The response ethicist, on the other hand, chooses to allow the situation to speak for itself and then to respond in a way that is relevant to the particular situation at hand.

Theologically, the teleological ethic is grounded in the doctrine of the Community of God. Life is lived with a view to some ideal future. The only acceptable response one can make to this "eschatological pull" is to act always with a view to enhancing and enlarging life-possibilities for oneself and others.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPING IDENTITY OF A LESBIAN

Having described in detail the response ethics of H. Richard Niebuhr, giving careful attention to the theology on which his model is based, and having made a comparison between response ethics and the ethics of deontology and teleology, the one step remaining in this chapter is to bring the discussion back to the primary focus of the study. In other words, what is the relevance of the foregoing theological-ethical discussion to the developing identity of a lesbian? As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, a lesbian at each stage in the development of her identity is operating out of a particular ethical mode, and as her ethical position changes, a change in the development of her identity is made possible. Though the two changes appear to take place simultaneously, it is my opinion that change in ethical focus precedes and enables change in identity development.

Speculation on the changes that occur in a lesbian's ethical focus throughout the stages described in chapter three is as follows:

1. Awareness

During the stage of awareness, the lesbian's ethical stance changes as a result of a change in her response-relationship to society. In the beginning, during the "pre-awareness" phase, she responds to her own sexuality and to her environment in a way that is natural and uncontrived. In one sense it cannot be said that she is operating out of any particular ethical stance since she is simply

acting according to her natural impulses, and no ethical decision-making is required of her. Beginning with the phase of "initial awareness" and becoming more obvious with the phase of "awareness of society's condemnation," the lesbian's perception of her relationship to society changes. She sees herself as one who is condemned by the law and begins judging herself according to the norms of society. From a deontological standpoint, she sees herself as guilty of violating one of the basic requirements of humanness. The truly human person, according to society's norms, is the heterosexual person.

2. Denial

In an attempt to avoid violating such a basic requirement, the lesbian enters a stage of denial during which stage she continues to operate out of a deontological ethical mode. Because of the condemnation of society, her guilt, her self-hatred, her self-condemnation are so strong as to prevent her from even thinking about the possibility of being herself. For as long as she allows herself to be dominated by "the law," some form of self-denial will continue.

3. Anger

In the early phases of the anger stage when denial is still quite strong, the lesbian continues to see herself and her situation from the point of view of deontology. Later on in the anger stage, however, when her anger is raised against the injustices and prejudices of society, this is a sure sign that she is beginning to free herself from bondage to the law, and see that there are other ways of looking

at her situation. She is in the process of changing from a deontological perspective to a teleological perspective, which change prepares her for the stage of acceptance.

4. Acceptance

When a lesbian allows herself to admit the dehumanizing aspects of some of society's norms and sees herself as one who has as much right to human fulfillment as anyone else, she begins to accept herself and work toward the goal of self-actualization. From a teleological standpoint, she strives to enhance the possibility of human fulfillment both for herself and her sisters. Involvement in political activity with the aim of achieving justice and equality for gay women and men is one way that this striving gets expressed by many lesbians.

5. Wholeness/Authenticity

It is interesting to note the kinds of words just used to describe the stage of acceptance - nouns such as "goal" and aim;" verbs such as "working," "striving," and "achieving." For as long as these words are primary in a lesbian's life, she is seen to be looking at her situation from a teleological standpoint. Many lesbians do stay at the stage of acceptance and are able to actualize their potential in a way that seems to be satisfying and fulfilling to them. Others, however, move to a different way of relating to themselves which is not primarily characterized by striving, doing, working or achieving. They relate to themselves and their environment in terms of what Niebuhr calls "responsibility."

From the ethical standpoint of response, though the norms of society are still important to a lesbian and political activity is still an important part of her life-style, they are not now of ultimate importance to her. The ultimately important issues are: 1) knowing and understanding herself in relation to the "universe," the "center of Being," the "principle of Being," the "ground of Being," the "totality of things," "God," whatever she chooses to call it; and 2) responding appropriately to herself, her society, and her "God," a response which is now possible because of her awareness of, and acceptance of, grace.³⁶ The questions she asks are: "Who am I?" and "What is a 'fitting' response to the knowledge of myself as a woman and a lesbian?" "What is a 'fitting' response to my society in which I am twice stigmatized?" "What is a 'fitting' response to my universe, the center of Being who is the One, the Power, the Unifier?" Such a reflection on the moral life helps one achieve "a unity, a first loyalty, a center of personal integrity."³⁷ Thus, the stage of wholeness and authenticity becomes a possibility when a lesbian operates out of the theological-ethical mode of response.

³⁶As mentioned earlier, this does not imply the need for a traditional religious faith. A lesbian does not have to be "religious" in order to achieve wholeness/authenticity. Rather, she is to be in touch with the center of her being in whatever way is meaningful to her, and respond appropriately to that center.

³⁷James Gustafson, "Introduction," in Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, p. 16.

D. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the theology of H. Richard Niebuhr has been described as theocentric. The important theological issue for Niebuhr is the fact that persons stand face to face with God, powerless in the presence of the One who is ultimate Power. God is seen as Power, as Goodness, and as the One who acts in and through the events of everyday life. Through grace, one is able to see God as the Unifier, the One who is worthy of trust, the affirmer of being.

Niebuhr's model of response ethics was discussed in relation to its four elements: response, interpretation, accountability and social solidarity.

While Niebuhr's emphasis was seen in terms of the question: "What is the fitting response?" the emphasis of deontology was seen in terms of: "What is the law?" and, of teleology, in terms of: "What is my goal?" A comparison between deontology, teleology and response ethics was made also from a theological perspective and it was suggested that deontology is grounded in the doctrine of creation and the theological concept of law and order, teleology is grounded in the doctrine of the Community of God, and the ethic of response is grounded in the doctrine of grace.

Finally it was seen that the theological-ethical discussion has implications for the developing identity of a lesbian. It was suggested that a definite relationship exists between the ethical modes out of which a lesbian operates and the stages in the development of her identity. As change occurs in her ethical focus, the way is

prepared for her to move to a different stage in the development of her identity.

The case study in chapter five will be followed by an analysis of the case from psychological and ethical perspectives.

Chapter 5

CASE STUDY AND ANALYSIS

Interviews were conducted with seven women who professed to be lesbians, and then one was chosen from among them that I felt would most adequately represent all the stages set out in chapter three of this study.

A. THE INTERVIEW

1. Initial contact

Of the seven women interviewed initially, one was in therapy, three were acquaintances of mine, and three were contacted through the Women's Building in Los Angeles. Initial contact was made with each subject at which time I explained the purpose and anticipated format of the interviews. One of my aims during this meeting was to establish a relationship with the subject which would prepare the way for the interviews to be warm, positive, personal experiences rather than a cold and stilted reporting of facts. I was particularly careful not to disclose my hypotheses to the subjects at any time either during the initial conversations or during the interviews. After the seven initial conversations, the four persons who seemed to have the most potential for representing the model were chosen for further interviews.

When a person consented to be interviewed and to have such interviews recorded, times were arranged for the interviews to take

place. Almost every woman stressed, in the initial conversation, the need for confidentiality, and assurance of confidentiality was given.

2. Interviews

Originally, I had anticipated conducting three one-hour interviews with each of the four subjects, but in fact two interviews were conducted with each subject, which lasted approximately one-and-one-half hours each.

The purpose of the interview was for the interviewer to hear the subject's "life story," particularly as it related to her knowledge of herself as a lesbian. With some subjects the story seemed to flow out of them, with very little need for interruption by the interviewer, while others seemed more comfortable answering questions, or relating to the interviewer in a way that could have been a client/therapist relationship. Regardless of the way the interview proceeded, I was able to hear the story in each case.

When it was necessary for the subject to be prompted with questions, I was particularly careful not to use the actual words with which the stages have been named in the present model, for fear that this would prejudice the interview. For example, instead of: "Did you feel any anger?" the question might be: "When you realized you were a lesbian, did you blame anyone? Did you think it was someone's fault?"

Before recounting the case study chosen to exemplify the model, a few words about the other six lesbians contacted seems appropriate.

B. THE OTHER INTERVIEWS

One of the women, a strong feminist, came out as a lesbian in the context of the women's movement in order to make a political statement against male domination of women in all spheres of life. In this instance, she chose not to be interviewed. Therefore the following comments will be about the other five interviewees.

It was interesting to notice that each of the other lesbians after only the initial conversation could be located fairly easily at a particular place in the development of her identity, in accordance with the model presented here. In the following account, the lesbians who were chosen for further interviews after the initial conversation will be referred to as "subjects," while the others will be called "contacts."

Subject No. 1 was found to be vacillating between the stages of denial and acceptance. Though acceptance seemed to be getting stronger, there still appeared to be instances of denial which in my opinion were occasioned by the fact that the subject had not recognized nor dealt with her anger in any satisfying way.

Subject No. 2, having experienced awareness, denial and anger, seemed to be progressing well into the acceptance stage. During the interview she was experiencing and expressing a tremendous amount of anger at the fact that, due to society's negative attitudes toward lesbians, her lesbianism seemed to demand much more of her time and attention than any other aspect of her life. This subject seemed to be at the height of the anger stage while at the same time being very

definitely in the stage of acceptance.

Subject No. 3 demonstrated that she had come through the stages of awareness, denial and anger, and, at the time of the interview, had been in the stage of acceptance for several years. She had no interest in the movement for women's liberation, nor in the movement for gay liberation. Rather, she preferred to live quietly with her lover, getting together with other lesbian friends on rare occasions. She admitted to living her life in compartments, but seemed to feel a good deal of satisfaction with the way her life was moving.

Contact No. 1 was a lesbian who had come out during late adolescence, and who it seemed, had spent the last six years making her lesbian life-style as obvious as possible to family, friends, and society in general. She saw this as a sign of healthy acceptance, and disagreed with the interviewer's observation that there was a great amount of anger being expressed in her "openness." Nevertheless I am inclined to locate her in the stage of anger.

Contact No. 2 referred to herself as "bisexual." It appears that the labeling of herself in this way is based on the fact that even though her basic orientation has always been toward same-sex relationships, she recalls one relationship she had with a man that involved sexual intercourse. It is also based on the fact that she is "open" to dating men, even though she does not actively seek it. It seems to me that this subject is still very much into the stage of denial.

In presenting the following case study, care has been taken

to protect the identity of the person interviewed. Toward this end, some of the identifiable facts have been changed without changing the essence of the case.

C. CASE STUDY: ANN

Ann is a thirty-two year old woman living presently in the Los Angeles area with her lesbian lover of two years. The relationship is, in Ann's words, "solid, stable and satisfying." Professionally, she has a Ph.D. in psychology, and teaches at an undergraduate institution.

1. Early history

Ann was born in Northern California in 1944, to white, middle-class, protestant parents. She was the second of three children--two years younger than her sister, and four years older than her brother. Ann describes her childhood as "about as normal as it could be." Her mother, she explained, was "the conservative type" who felt it her responsibility to be at home every day when her children came home from school. Ann cannot recall a time when her mother went out to work. Her father worked a nine-to-five job and spent almost every evening at home. Neither parent had many interests outside the home, their only other serious interest being the church. For Ann, attending Sunday School every Sunday "seemed as natural as breathing."

In general, Ann had a good relationship with both of her parents and both of her siblings. She remembers, however, feeling much closer to her mother and sister. The relationship with her father

and brother was on a relatively superficial level--joking, playing, and working, but very little communication about things that were important to her.

Ann remembers wishing she had been a boy. "Boys had much more freedom, much more fun," she said. She enjoyed playing football, climbing trees, and riding bicycles with her brother and his friends. She earned the reputation of being a "tomboy," and says she wore the label with pride--especially when her father called her that. She was the family clown, and enjoyed the appreciation with which her sense of humor was received.

2. History from early adolescence

Ann, following the lead of her sister, began being interested in boys at an early age. From about age thirteen she found she was "popular with boys" and enjoyed the challenge of having two or three "boyfriends" at the same time. She admits to being naive in matters relating to sex. "If anyone had tried anything," she says, "I'm sure I wouldn't have known what was happening." Her sex education came from one conversation with her sister, when Ann was about fourteen. She said she still remembers her feelings of horror and disgust. It seemed unfair to her that God would allow men to "do that" to women. Ann remembers several restless nights, followed by a vow that no man would ever "do that" to her. "Then the whole issue seemed to go away. It was as though I had resolved it."

The interviewer asked the subject to try to recall when she first realized she was a lesbian. She said she did not remember ever

hearing the word "lesbian" till she moved to the San Francisco area in her early twenties. She recalled having strong feelings for a woman teacher when she was about thirteen years of age, and stated that that was the first of many. Regarding relationships with peers, Ann said that while her friendships with boys were usually fun, her friendships with girls had a special quality about them. In Junior High School she spent most of her "alone" time thinking about her "special" girlfriend. She remarked, as if it had only just occurred to her, that, while she always had more than one boyfriend at a time, she only ever had one special girlfriend at a time.

It was not until she was about age sixteen that Ann began worrying about the way she felt toward her female friends. One night when she and her girlfriend were out on a double date, she knew that her desire to hold her girlfriend's hand, instead of her date's hand, was a sign that "things were not the way they ought to be." She began comparing the way she felt about her men friends with the way she felt about her women friends, and realized the feelings she had for her women friends were more serious and much more important to her. She then recalled that, even in the first grade, her friendships with special girlfriends had been very important to her, and remembered thinking that maybe she had always been "like that."

Between the ages of sixteen and twenty, Ann said she "worried a lot, dated a lot, prayed a lot, and became very religious." She heard the word "homosexual" often during these years, but "tried not to think about it."

At age twenty, while visiting relatives in another town, she

met a woman about six years older than she. They spent most of the days and evenings together for the remaining week of Ann's stay and though they never slept together, Ann recalled kissing and hugging that affected her in a way she had never experienced before. She admitted rather sheepishly to being "turned on even now just thinking about it," during the interview. Ann and her new friend lived in different towns, so it turned out that they never saw each other again after the vacation was over, but they did write vowing that one day they would be together again. "I have a weird memory of feeling that somehow the separation was justified as punishment for my sin. The guilt was really bad--but we did write almost every day." Ann recalled that after a week or two her parents became angry about the time she spent writing to "that woman." Though she did continue to write to her friend after that, she remembers the intensity of the guilt every time she received or wrote a letter. They continued to write, but when her friend began writing about a man with whom she was becoming seriously involved, the correspondence between them dwindled until they ceased all contact.

Ann spoke of the next few years as the most painful period of her life. She was having more and more involvements with women and feeling more and more guilt as a result of them. She described it this way: "I felt a great split right down the middle of my life. I was dating men and loving women at the same time. After my sister married, there was a lot of pressure on me to follow her example. I almost did become engaged to one guy I'd been dating for about a year, but I got to the point where I had to admit to myself I didn't feel

anything for him compared to what I felt for my girlfriend."

She went on: "I was still very religious in those days. Every time, after I made love to a woman, I would feel so guilty. I prayed a lot. In my prayers I asked God to forgive me, and give me the strength I needed to overcome temptation. I went to three different ministers to ask for their help. One told me I would grow out of it! Can you believe that? I was already twenty-two! Another told me to spend more time in prayer and reading God's word. The third suggested a psychiatrist for me to go and see. I didn't go."

At age twenty-three Ann moved to the San Francisco area still feeling a tremendous amount of pain. For the first few months she worked during the day and spent her evenings alone in her apartment reading. She was determined to understand what was "wrong" with her, how she came to be that way, and what her chances were for being "cured." Most of the psychology books she read left her with one impression: she was abnormal. Most of the religious books she read told her: she was sinful. She had not attended a church service since moving away from home, but for a time she "maintained a good relationship with God." She recalled, however, that the more she read, the more annoyed she became with God. "How could God let this happen? How could God make me this way and then tell me that what I'm doing is wrong?" In future months, she determinedly put all thoughts of God and religion out of her mind. God was not the only target of her blame, however. She blamed her parents also. If she herself was not responsible for her condition, then they must be. Her contact with her parents over the next nine months to a year was minimal.

After a few months alone in the city, having found no answers nor achieved the peace of mind she was searching for, she described herself as being "at the point of despair." Finally, she started seeing a therapist--a male therapist. She admitted that seeing him was helpful at the time, though as she looks back on that experience, she sees things she was not able to see at the time. For example, she is aware of an attitude in him which she now recognizes as "If only you'd go to bed with me and let me show you what sex is really all about, your problems would be over." The most helpful part of the therapy, Ann commented, was the group the therapist referred her to. It was a mixed group, women and men, and it was led by her therapist. The most helpful part of the experience seems to have been the friendship she was able to make with one or two of the other members of the group.

When the group finished meeting, Ann and one of the other women members decided to join an all-woman group led by a female therapist. "That was the best thing I ever did," said Ann. She sees that decision as the one that opened the door to all the good experiences she has had since. The group turned out to be a consciousness-raising group. She began to understand herself both as a woman and as a lesbian. She began understanding and expressing some of the anger she had been feeling. She began having confidence in herself. She began liking herself. In addition, there were other lesbians in the group, through whom she met other lesbians. Soon she met a woman with whom she fell in love. They became lovers and, though the relationship lasted only a few months, it was a positive experience for Ann.

As a result of the consciousness-raising group and the relationships that grew out of that experience, Ann's life took on new meaning and new direction. She said it was only after she became a feminist and the relationship between herself and society took on a new perspective, that she was able to admit to herself without need of justification that she was a lesbian, and be at peace with that fact. This, too, led her to a new understanding of God, and she was able, once more, to feel a degree of closeness with God. The distance between herself and the church, however, continues to be as great as it had been since she moved to the city. "I don't think that will ever change," she said.

Ann made a decision during that time to go back to school, with thoughts of becoming a therapist. At age twenty-six, she transferred to a school in the Los Angeles area, where she went on to receive a Ph.D. in psychology. Then, instead of becoming a therapist, she applied for a teaching position and began teaching in the fall of 1975.

When I asked Ann how she feels about her life now, she replied: "I feel great. Compared with several years ago, I feel really together. My lover and I have been living together now for almost two years. We have some close friends who are also lesbians, as well as other friends who are feminists." I asked if finding a compatible lover was the thing that helped her feel "together," and the following conversation ensued:

Ann: Finding a compatible lover helped, but no, it was finding myself that did it.

Interviewer: You mean the experience you had up North with the consciousness-raising group?

Ann: Yes. That was a start at least. Then I began seeing some purpose to my life...things I could do...people I could help, maybe. I really want my life to mean something.

After a lengthy pause, I admitted to Ann that even after several conversations, it was not clear to me whether or not she had "come out." She responded by saying: "That's because it's not clear to me! Seriously, that's something I think about a lot. I'm out with my friends. I'm out when I'm with feminists--even feminists I've never met before. But at school, I'm in the closet with the door closed tight! I know I would lose my job if they knew--and I like teaching a lot. (Pause) Oh, I'm not out with my family either."

I remarked that she seemed really sad when she said that, to which she replied: "Yes. I wish so much that my family, especially my parents, could know me, understand me, and share this very beautiful part of my life. But I'm afraid they'd never understand. It would really hurt them."

Ann's plans for the immediate future are to continue more or less doing the same things she is doing right now. "I like my life the way it is right now," she said. "It's taken me a long time to get here. I want to stay like this for a while and enjoy it."

D. ANALYSIS OF THE CASE

The representative case presented above has been analysed in detail for the purpose of discovering whether or not the stages

presented in Chapter three are identifiable in the subject's life story. The findings are that the stages are indeed identifiable, though with some noticeable variations. Before going any further, it is important to point out that very few cases, if any, could be expected to fit neatly into all the phases and all the stages as presented in the model. Consequently, the variations appearing in the case at hand should be seen not as evidence for changing or discarding the model, but as evidence that every case, while fitting within the broad model, will have variations peculiar to itself. The strong probability that every case will fit within the broad model is borne out to some degree by the fact that each of the other subjects interviewed did fit the general pattern suggested, but, of course, further empirical research is needed before such a statement can be substantiated.

For convenience, the analysis will be written up according to the stages presented. At every stage, the case will be examined first from a psychological perspective and then from an ethical perspective. The psychological analysis will seek to discover first of all, if each stage does indeed appear, and secondly, how each stage is constituted. The ethical analysis will seek to determine the ethical stance out of which the subject was operating at each stage, and point to the growth that took place when the subject changed, or was enabled to change, the basis on which she made decisions about her life.

1. The Awareness stage

a. Psychological analysis. Analysis of the case study reveals

the three phases of awareness suggested in the model. The "pre-awareness" phase begins for Ann at age 13 and is characterized by "strong feelings" for both female teachers and peers. The "special quality" about her friendships with girls was something she was not aware of until some time later. The "pre-awareness" phase continues for approximately three years at which time she begins worrying about the way she feels toward her female friends. This marks the beginning of the phase of "initial awareness." She realizes, in her words, "things were not the way they ought to be." When initial awareness does occur, there seems to be immediate denial, which raises an interesting question about the relationship between the stages of awareness and denial. This question will be looked at during the discussion of denial to follow.

The third phase, i.e. "awareness of society's condemnation," seems to occur to some degree as soon as "initial awareness" takes place as evidenced by her immediate denial, but the real impact of society's condemnation does not occur until she actually experiences a physical relationship with a woman. It is interesting to note that the fact of society's disapproval seems to be highlighted for her in the disapproval her parents express about the amount of time she spends corresponding with her woman friend.

b. Ethical Analysis. Until Ann begins comparing herself with other women her own age, she has no thought that the way she feels about persons of her own sex is in any way "unnatural." As soon as she thinks of herself as "different," however, her guilt begins.

"Different from the norm" is somehow interpreted in her mind as "different from the Right." Responding to herself from a deontological standpoint, she sees herself as one who is transgressing the law, and she feels guilty.

2. The Denial Stage

a. Psychological analysis. Analysis of the denial that takes place in the representative case reveals that the stages of awareness and denial are much more closely related than I was suggesting in my model. Ann certainly goes through a denial stage but denial does not wait until awareness is firmly established. Rather, denial begins with the first glimmerings of initial awareness.

In the case of Ann, denial takes place in two steps. The first occurs immediately after she realizes something about her is "different." She talks about worrying, dating, praying, and becoming very religious. Also, she mentions trying not to think about the word "homosexual" whenever she hears it. The second step of denial occurs after she has her first physical/sexual experience with a woman. The kind of denial she expresses here is that described in the model as a "cycle." She makes love to a woman--feels guilty--prays for forgiveness and strength to overcome temptation--makes love to a woman again--and so the cycle continues until she is age 23.

b. Ethical analysis. The guilt Ann felt in the awareness stage continues and intensifies in the stage of denial. Actually it was the guilt she felt as a transgressor of the law that triggered her

denial in the first place. Throughout the denial stage, she continues to be dominated by a desire to obey the law and do what is "right." She continues to respond to herself and her situation from a deontological perspective.

3. The Anger Stage

a. Psychological analysis. Analysis of the case reveals that there is a period between the stages of denial and anger that does not really fit in either of those stages. The beginning of this period is marked by Ann's statement that she was determined to understand what was wrong with her. This determination which leads her to read and study in the area of homosexuality is certainly not denial, nor can it be said to be an expression of anger. I see this as a possible indication that another stage should be added to my model which would show the importance of this period of searching for answers. Another possibility would be to see this period as a later phase of the awareness stage and call it the phase of "deliberate awareness." Though I favor the latter alternative, I prefer to wait until more empirical data is gathered before making such an addition to the existing model.

It is only after Ann learns more about society's condemnation of lesbians that she enters the anger stage. Her anger is directed at God and at her parents, and is expressed in a total withdrawal from God and a partial withdrawal from her parents. It seems to me that Ann's "despair" is probably also an expression of her anger. One of the reasons why her experience in the women's consciousness-raising group was such a turning point for her seems to be that it enabled her

to get in touch with some of her anger, and deal with it to some degree.

b. Ethical analysis. To identify with certainty the ethical position of the subject during her anger stage is difficult. She seems to be changing over from a deontological to a teleological position, as evidenced by the changeover from anger expressed in withdrawal to anger expressed against an unjust society. Ann's anger at society for its refusal to accept her reveals the change in her ethical stance which is needed before acceptance of herself is possible.

4. The Acceptance Stage

a. Psychological analysis. The point at which Ann enters the stage of acceptance is clearly during her experience in the woman's consciousness-raising group. The first group she is in seems to have opened the way for the experience of self-acceptance, but she does not actually feel acceptable until she experiences the acceptance of other women, an experience that is available to her in the all-woman group. She speaks of self-understanding, self-confidence, and self-liking, which lead her to experience new meaning and new direction for her life. A significant fact in the case of Ann is that acceptance of herself as a lesbian is tied very closely to acceptance of herself as a woman. These two do not always go together, though I suggest this factor helped Ann move as quickly as she did from acceptance to the stage of wholeness and authenticity.

One other point that needs to be mentioned is the fact that in the representative case there does not appear to be the degree of

compartmentalizing suggested in the model as being characteristic of this stage. One of the factors contributing to that could be the subject's relative isolation from people from the time she moves to the San Francisco area until the time she experiences acceptance in the group. From that point, all the friends she makes are women with whom pretense is not necessary. The only situations in which she needs to pretend to be heterosexual therefore are at work, and on the few occasions she visits her family,

b. Ethical analysis. Ann's experience of community which prepared her for entry into the acceptance stage enables her now to view herself as one who has as much right to human fulfilment as anyone else. She does not need to continue thinking of herself as sinful or crippled in any way. Rather, she sees herself as one who has the potential for self-actualization. Though she does not seem to be involved in overt political activity, her interest in human fulfilment as a goal of life reveals a teleological-ethical emphasis.

5. The Wholeness/Authenticity Stage

a. Psychological analysis. In the case study, there is a point where the subject begins to have a more holistic view of herself. It is at the point where she begins to see her relationship with society from a new perspective, i.e., from the perspective of one who is twice stigmatized--once because she is a woman and again because she is a lesbian. This new perspective, this new understanding of her true position in society, is needed before she can relate authentically

to it. Also at this point, she begins to think again in terms of a close relationship with God. As I see it, it is at this point that Ann moves into the stage of wholeness and authenticity. The difference between this new stage and the stage of acceptance in Ann's case lies in the quality of transcendence that is evident. There is a sense in which she has risen above the striving that characterizes her experience in the acceptance stage and is now able to see herself in relation to a wider community.

The wholeness she experiences is expressed in her words: "I feel really together." Authenticity, in terms of choosing her life, is evident when she talks about wanting her life to mean something, and again at the end of the interview when she talks about her plans for the future. Her decision to "stay like this for a while and enjoy it" is in a very real sense a choosing of her immediate future.

b. Ethical analysis. With the experience of self-acceptance Ann experiences a peace that seems to enable her to get in touch with her real self, her center. This experience, in turn, enables her to relate authentically to society and to the center of Being, which she chooses to call God. At this stage, Ann appears to be operating out of Niebuhr's theological-ethical mode of response, and it is this perspective that enables her to experience the wholeness and authenticity that have become apparent in her life. Ann's experience with the all-woman group is close to a perfect example of what was referred to earlier as "the unconditional love of God" experienced in the unconditional love of a group of friends. It was through the grace that

she experienced in that group that she was able to respond as she did.

E. SUMMARY

After an explanation as to how the contacts were made and the interviews took place, the representative case was presented with particular attention to the subject's history from early adolescence. An analysis of the case which was undertaken from psychological and ethical perspectives, revealed: 1) that the subject had progressed through each of the five stages as set out in the model; and 2) that the stage of wholeness/authenticity was made possible when the subject began operating out of the theological/ethical mode of response.

The final chapter to follow will deal with conclusions and implications of this study.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study has been to suggest a model of identity development that would be useful to those who are in any way concerned with the development of identity in lesbians. Those to whom this study is offered, therefore, include teachers, counselors, parents and friends of lesbians, and lesbians themselves. In this chapter, the study will be summarized, conclusions will be presented, and finally major implications for psychology, for education, for theological ethics, and for future research will be pointed to.

A. SUMMARY

A detailed study of identity development in persons who are stigmatized by society supported the suggestion in the introductory chapter that a lesbian's struggle to resolve the identity conflict is often a prolonged and difficult one. It was seen that a lesbian carries a double stigma--one because she is a woman and another because she is a lesbian.

A review of the literature on lesbianism revealed an absence of research into the development of identity in lesbians. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the filling of that gap by suggesting a model and testing it in terms of a representative case. The representative case method was seen as an important first step in the direction of more rigorous testing through extensive empirical research.

The model, as presented, suggested five stages through which a lesbian passes in the development of her identity. They were the stages of Awareness, Denial, Anger, Acceptance and Wholeness/Authenticity. It was also suggested that at each stage in the development of identity a lesbian is operating out of a particular ethical mode, and that the different modes out of which she operates have an influence on the development of her identity. Compared with the ethical modes of deontology and teleology, the theological-ethical mode of response was held up as the ultimate ethical position required in order that the stage of wholeness and authenticity could be reached.

The representative case written up in chapter five was that case which I considered to be the best example of the model presented. The case was chosen from among seven lesbians interviewed. Analysis of the case revealed that it did fit the model in that all the stages were identifiable, though with some noticeable variations. A comment on the fact that these variations existed will be made in the following discussion of the writer's conclusions.

B. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the foregoing research, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. In at least one instance, the hypothesis has been upheld that a lesbian proceeds through the stages of awareness, denial, anger, acceptance and wholeness/authenticity in the development of her identity.
2. In at least one instance, it has been seen that the stages occur in sequence, beginning with awareness and moving on through to

wholeness/authenticity.

3. In at least one instance, it has been seen that while the stages do occur in sequence, there is much overlapping.

The next conclusion was drawn from the fact that while the representative case did fit within the broad model, there were nevertheless some noticeable variations peculiar to the case under analysis.

4. Very few cases, if any, will fit neatly into all the phases and all the stages as presented in the model. This is not to be seen as evidence for changing or discarding the model, however, but simply as evidence that every case will have variations peculiar to itself.

5. In at least one instance, the hypothesis has been upheld that successful resolution of a lesbian's identity crisis is possible when she moves beyond the deontological and teleological ethical stances, and begins operating out of the theological-ethical mode of response.

6. In at least one instance, it has been seen that wholeness and authenticity are made possible through grace.

7. In at least one instance, it has been seen that the unconditional grace of God can be experienced as the unconditional grace available to one in the context of an accepting, supportive, intimate group of friends.

The above conclusions lead to a further conclusion, namely:

8. There is a strong possibility that what has been found to be true in the representative case will be found to be true in other cases when further research is done.

C. IMPLICATIONS

1. For Psychology

a. The field of psychology has dealt extensively with the development of identity in adolescents who fit the norm, with a view to understanding and assisting them as they move through the identity crisis. This study has revealed that if more attention were given to the study of identity development in such stigmatized members of society as lesbians, the prolonged nature of their identity development could be made shorter and also less painful.

b. Also, this study has revealed the urgent need for a re-definition of such concepts as "normal" and "deviant" both in psychology and sociology. Questions that need to be asked are: "Normal in comparison with what?" "Deviant in comparison with what?" and "What makes 'normal' normal and 'deviant' deviant?" The fact that in a homosexual society, a heterosexual would be deviant, raises the question: "Ought a heterosexual in that environment be classified as sick or disordered?"

c. Again, this study implies the necessity for taking seriously Freud's contention that human nature is basically bisexual, and that as a consequence, both homosexual and heterosexual functioning are natural expressions of sexuality.

d. If human nature's original predisposition to bisexuality were accepted as a fact, the implications would be far-reaching. The structures of society which rest at present on the heterosexual norm, would be overturned. Existing sex-role stereotypes would lose their

power to control. Equality would be the only acceptable basis for relationships. Women could no longer be kept in inferior, subservient positions. The kind of therapy which exists for the purpose of helping people adjust to sex-role expectations would no longer have a place in the counseling profession. One thing that becomes obvious when considering the implications involved in accepting the bisexual norm is that patriarchal society has much invested in keeping the heterosexual norm intact.

e. Finally, this study has implications for clinical psychology as well. Counseling which helps lesbians to understand their situation and which encourages them to move through each stage and on to the next, is the kind of counseling that will make wholeness and authenticity real possibilities for lesbians. Consciousness-raising groups and other all-woman support groups have much therapeutic value for a lesbian at any stage in the development of her identity, and particularly at the stages of denial and anger. Awareness of her oppression as a woman in a male-dominated society is just as important as awareness of herself as a lesbian, and an understanding of both are necessary in order for her to enter the stage of wholeness and authenticity.

2. For Education

The implications of this study for education are specifically in the area of moral education. Niebuhr's theological ethic of response represents a level of moral reflection that surpasses those levels popularly presented by moral educators.

Lawrence Kohlberg, for example, has set out certain levels of moral development which he sees as a basis for moral education. The three levels of moral thinking out of which he sees people operating are what he calls: 1) the preconventional level; 2) the conventional level; and 3) the postconventional level. The preconventional level is occupied by conformists, usually children Kohlberg adds, who are responsive to labels of good and bad, and who interpret good and bad in terms of their physical consequences. The conventional level can also be described as conformist, but Kohlberg points out, the concern at this level is "not only with *conforming* to the individual's social order but in *maintaining*, supporting and justifying this order."¹ The postconventional level is concerned with "self-chosen *ethical principles* appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistency...(such as) *justice...reciprocity* and *equality* of human rights as *individual persons*."²

While Kohlberg's preconventional and conventional levels represent a deontological ethical stance, his postconventional level represents a teleological ethical stance, which for him is the more mature level of moral reflection. An important implication of the present study for moral education is that an even more mature level of moral reflection has been presented. Niebuhr's ethics of response which transcends both deontology and teleology, is a mode of moral or

¹Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," Psychology Today II:4 (September 1968) 26.

²*Ibid.*, p. 26.

ethical reflection that makes possible whole and authentic existence.

3. For Theological Ethics

The main implication of this study for theological ethics is that there is a definite need for the development of an ethic for lesbians (and male homosexuals) based on Niebuhr's ethic of response.

Of the few theologians who have written about homosexuality, Norman Pittenger is the one who has most carefully presented what he calls: "An Ethic for Homosexuals." Though he does indicate that he includes lesbians in all that he says,³ his writing reveals that he is primarily concerned with the phenomenon of male homosexuality. The present study reminds theologians that it is not always helpful or correct to presume that what applies to male homosexuals will also apply to lesbians.

The ethic Pittenger presents for both lesbians and male homosexuals includes the following suggestions:

1. Do not accept your homosexuality without questioning it.
2. If you are a homosexual, recognize and accept it as a fact.
3. Remember - God loves you just as you are.
4. Act responsibly.
5. Develop close friendships (for sharing and support).
6. Make a decision about whether or not to engage in physical

³Norman Pittenger, Time for Consent: A Christian's Approach to Homosexuality (London: SCM Press, 1970), p. 20.

contacts.⁴

In Pittenger's words, physical expression must be an "expression of genuine love, welcomed by both persons, with the intention of faithfulness, of tenderness, of mutuality, of a union of personalities in giving-and-receiving...."⁵

Though Pittenger's ethic includes responsible decision-making which occurs in the context of a relationship between God and neighbor, there is a sense in which he has set up an ideal to be aimed at. In an earlier chapter he says: "To be on the way to love...is to begin to live."⁶ The ideal is love in the context of a responsible relationship. This study has pointed out that there is more involved in the meaning of "responsibility" than Pittenger has included in his ethic; hence the need for the development of an ethic for lesbians (and male homosexuals) based on Niebuhr's ethic of response. Such an ethic would not concern itself primarily with suggestions as to how to act. Rather, based in the sure knowledge of the availability of grace, it would encourage self-knowledge, self-understanding, response, wholeness and authenticity.

D. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It has been maintained throughout this study that the testing of the hypotheses through the use of the representative case was a necessary step in preparing the way for more extensive empirical

⁴Ibid., pp. 115-24.

⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁶Ibid., p. 51.

research with a number of lesbians. The way has now been prepared. In the research to be undertaken in the future, good use could possibly be made of questionnaires as an alternative way of gathering the data required, but it is my opinion that the interview method, though time-consuming, will bring the most accurate results.

Another need is for this study's model to be tested in relation to male homosexuals. Do the same stages apply for a male homosexual as for a lesbian? If so, what are the implications of that for the study of homosexuality among men?

Finally, research is also needed which seeks to make comparisons between lesbians and feminists. What is the extent of the differences between a woman who is twice-stigmatized and a woman who is once-stigmatized? Do the stages set out in this study apply to the development of identity in a heterosexual feminist, and if so, what are the implications of such a discovery for the study of feminism and of lesbianism?

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